

Reading Julia Kristeva's Novels. Revisiting French Feminist Theory

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Declaration

I declare that the entire work now submitted as a thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh is the result of my own independent research and is wholly my own composition.

I further declare that this thesis has not already been presented in substance for another degree and will not be submitted for any other degree in this or any other university.

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Abstract

Internationally known as a practising psychoanalyst, literary theoretician and critic, the French feminist Julia Kristeva has recently shifted her interest from theory to the novel, albeit that the boundary between theory and novel is indeterminate for her. This research is a study of her novels to date, *Les Samourais*, *Le vieil homme et les loups*, and *Possessions*, and the way in which they embody her theoretical works in the context of the relationship between French feminist theory and post-colonial (feminist) theory, as well as between French feminist theory and Anglo-American feminism. It is divided into two parts and six chapters.

Part one examines the implications of how Kristeva's problematic status as a French feminist can be situated in relation to post-colonial (feminist) theorists and critics. The starting point for this part is the feminist post-colonial theorist and critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's critique of Kristeva's *Des Chinoises*, of which narcissism is the theme. A comparison is made, in the first chapter, between Spivak's argument that Kristeva is a privileged informant in representing Chinese women in *Des Chinoises* and Kristeva's fictional portrayal of her characters as a reincarnation of Narcissus, which serves as the basis of my exploration into Kristeva's theory of love. This is followed by a study of the correlation between Kristeva's theory of melancholia and her fictional representation of it in the second chapter. The focus on the relationship between the work of Kristeva and that of the post-colonial critic David Punter at the end of the second chapter also continues to be the object of analysis in the third chapter. This aspect of the relationship between French feminist theory and post-colonial theory paves the way for my reading of Kristeva's theory of the abject and abjection, an interpretation which brings part one to a conclusion.

Part two starts with an introduction to Kristeva's relationship with the other two French feminist theorists Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, whose work and Kristeva's become representative of French feminism. This understanding of French feminist theory among the Anglophone feminist reading public obscures the theoretical positions of feminist thought in France. The objective of this part is to destabilise the underlying assumption that French feminist theory is apolitical and Anglo-American feminism is political. This is achieved by analysing the themes of Kristeva's novels in the context of her theory of time, maternity, and body in the fourth, fifth and sixth chapters. The possibility of establishing a relationship between the intellectual and the political within the domain of feminist literary criticism and theory is illustrated by the stories of Kristeva's heroines. Through these stories, which reflect social realities, the debate between French feminist theory and Anglo-American feminism can be related to Kristeva's theory of the semiotic *chora* and its interaction with the symbolic. The conclusion of this thesis applies the Kristevan concept of a subject-in-process to a review of the term French feminist theory which constitutes the theoretical background of part one and part two.

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Abbreviations

Roman

LS: *Les Samouraïs*

VH: *Le vieil homme et les loups*

P: *Possessions*

INTRODUCTION

JULIA KRISTEVA ON NOVEL

If Kristeva's writings are, in Kathleen O'Grady's view, continual transformation of the New Testament invocation "In the beginning",¹ to read her novels raises the question: what are the origins of her novels? This can be approached from multifarious theories of reading a novel, but cannot be answered without comprehending the term novel.² In *Le Texte du roman: approche sémiologique d'une structure discursive transformationnelle*, Kristeva traces the origins of the term novel in European culture: <<Nous considérerons comme roman le type de récit qui s'organise nettement à partir de la fin du moyen âge et le début de la renaissance>> (1970, 25). The kind of narrative that she addresses in the book is characterised in its structure by <<[un] même ébranlement du système épique (la république grecque ou le féodalisme européen) et [un] passage vers un autre mode de pensée (la Grèce tardive – après le IV^{ème} siècle av. n.è. la Renaissance)>> (1970, 25). She calls that transition <<un passage du SYMBOLE au SIGNE>> and postulates that <<le roman est une structure narrative qui relève de l'idéologème du signe>> (1970, 25). For "the emergence of the novel as a linguistic form", says her critic Toril Moi in explaining the concept of <<l'idéologème du signe>>, "is made possible by a fundamental change in the perception of the sign itself".³ That change refers to the way in which "the general conception of the sign developed away from the idea of the sign as a transcendental closure and towards a linguistic practice which implied that it was an open-ended material structure".⁴ A perfect example of this idea of the novel as a semiotic practice in which the synthesised patterns of several utterances can be read⁵ is, for

¹ See Kathleen O'Grady's interview with Kristeva in *Parallax: Julia Kristeva 1966-1996. Aesthetics, Politics, Ethics* 8 (1998), pp. 8-11. In this interview, O'Grady asserts that Kristeva's writings "have been consistently framed by the Johanne quotation, 'In the beginning was the Word'". In *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: Essai sur l'abjection* Kristeva adopts Céline's revision: "'No! In the beginning was emotion. The Word came next to replace emotion as the trot replaces the gallop'". In *Histoires d'amour* she sums up her understanding of Freud with the statement: "'In the beginning was hatred'". Her text on the relation of psychoanalysis and faith is entitled *Au commencement était l'amour: psychanalyse et foi*. More recently, her work on Proust has reformulated the statement once again: "'In the beginning was suffering'". To that, Kristeva responds, "Origins are one of the fundamental questions of metaphysics that cannot be entirely avoided in linguistics or psychoanalysis", although she does think that O'Grady is treating her gently on that point.

² For a searching account of the development of the novel as a genre from roughly the sixteenth century (the meaning of the term, according to J. A. Cuddon, tends to derive from the Italian *novella* and the Spanish *novela*; the French term *nouvelle*, q.v., is closely related) to the late twentieth century (1989), see Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, pp. 599-641.

³ Moi (ed), *The Kristeva Reader*, p. 62. As Moi has also noted, "Kristeva borrows and redefines the term *ideologeme* from the Russian Formalist P. N. Medvedev" (1986, 62), a neologism which Leon S. Roudiez in his introduction to Kristeva's *Desire in Language* has associated with "what Michel Foucault has called *episteme*" (1980, 2).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See Kristeva, <<Le texte clos>>, in *Σημειωτική, Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, pp. 114-115.

Kristeva, Antoine de la Sale's *Jehan de Saintré* (1456); it is in this instance the object of her analysis in *Le Texte du roman*.

Her linguistic study of the *Histoire et plaisante chronique du petit Jehan de Saintré et de la jeune dame des Belles Cousines* contains an anecdote corresponding to O'Grady's observations on her writings. In an interview with France-Culture broadcast in 1988, she explained the backdrop of her first book (although not the first to be published), *Le Texte du roman*:

I had planned originally to write a thesis on the *nouveau roman* because I found the subject interesting, but I lost interest once I was in France. Rather than investigate the way the *nouveau roman* decomposed the form of the novel, I wanted to pose a different question: how did the novel establish itself as a genre? So I shifted my focus from the end to the beginning, and I studied the structure of the Renaissance novel. I chose a little-known novella: Antoine de la Sale's *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré*. This fascinating work shows how the novel was drawn from theater, from the carnivalesque genre, and from didactic, scholastic discourse. De la Sale's novel offers a fresh conception of human life and displays an acute awareness of language and narration.⁶

The argument that the origins of the novel lie outside the novel as genre is one of the points which she develops in her essay, <<Le texte clos>>, in *Σημειωτική, Recherches pour une sémanalyse*. In that essay, she suggests that <<l'énoncé romanesque n'est pas une séquence minimale (une entité définitivement délimitée). Il est une opération, un mouvement qui lie, mais plus encore constitue ce qu'on pourrait appeler les arguments de l'opération>> (1969, 114). Her investigation of novelistic utterances, however, can be traced back to her other essay, <<Le mot, le dialogue et le roman>>, written shortly after she moved to Paris from her native Bulgaria in 1966.

Thus, at the beginning of her work on novel is the essay, <<Le mot, le dialogue et le roman>>, in *Σημειωτική, Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, in which she, with her compatriot, Tzvetan Todorov, introduces the work of the Soviet theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin, to a Western audience. In the essay she expands on such ideas as "dialogism" and "carnivalism" introduced by Bakhtin.⁷ Her reading of Bakhtinian "dialogism" as an open-ended play between the text of the subject and the text of the addressee also gives rise to her concept of intertextuality, a term which is often misunderstood because of its connotations of a study of sources (1974, 60). By intertextuality, she means <<tout texte [qui] se construit comme mosaïque de citations, tout texte [qui] est absorption et transformation d'un autre texte>> (1969, 146). This concept functions as the starting point for her work on modernist discourse

⁶ This interview is part of an hour-long radio show on Kristeva entitled "The Pleasure of Julia Kristeva". The English translation is Ross Guberman's "Julia Kristeva in Person" in *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, p. 6.

⁷ According to Kristeva, <<Ce texte est écrit à partir des livres de Mikhail Bakhtine, *Problemi poetiki Dostoïevskovo* (*Problèmes de la poétique de Dostoïevski*), (Moscou, 1963); *Tvorchestvo François Rabelais* (*l'Œuvre de François Rabelais*), (Moscou, 1965)>> (1969, 143).

in her doctoral thesis, *La révolution du langage poétique*, published in 1974. In that book, which, as Toril Moi has put it, “brings together and develops in a more systematic fashion many of the themes and concepts which had informed her linguistic work right from the first years in Paris”,⁸ she concludes that the formation of the novel is <<le résultat d’une redistribution de plusieurs systèmes de signes différents: le carnaval, la poésie courtoise, le discours scolastique>> (1974, 59). This conclusion, in posing a challenge to traditional notions of literary influence, reiterates the point she made in studying Antoine de la Sale’s *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré* in *Le Texte du roman*. Furthermore, her study of the novella *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré* has close parallels with Bakhtin’s study of the genre Menippean discourse, a discourse which she discusses in her presentation and development of Bakhtin’s central ideas in <<Le mot, le dialogue et le roman>>.

According to her, the term Menippean is coined by Bakhtin to refer to his study of the polyphonic novel as an absorption of the carnival and the monological novel as a stifling of that literary structure, namely Menippean discourse (1969, 149). As she goes on to explain, Bakhtin speaks of <<‘deux voies qui se joignent dans le récit’>> to pinpoint the <<‘ambivalence’>> of the relationship between writing, which Bakhtin considers as <<lecture du corpus littéraire antérieur>>, and the text, <<absorption de et réplique à un autre texte>> (1969, 149). Menippean discourse, which is subjected to its own structure, constructing and understanding itself through itself, has its root in carnivalesque folklore and Socratic dialogue (1969, 160-164). It takes its name from <<Ménippe de Gadare>>, a philosopher of the third century BC, but the genre itself actually appears much earlier (1969, 164). Despite the fact that <<L’aspect ménippéen a été dominé au Moyen Age par l’autorité du texte religieux [et] durant l’ère bourgeoise par l’absolutisme de l’individu et des choses>> (1969, 168), Menippean discourse survives. Enduring, in various forms, through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Reformation through to the present (the novels of Joyce, Kafka and Bataille),⁹ this carnivalesque genre has <<une influence énorme sur le développement de la littérature européenne et notamment sur la formation du roman>> (1969, 165). In Kristeva’s view, it embodies

l’effort de la pensée européenne pour sortir des cadres des substances identiques causalement déterminées afin de l’orienter vers un autre mode de pensée: celui qui procède par dialogue (une logique de distance, relation, analogie, opposition non exclusive, transfinie) (1969, 169).

⁸ Moi (ed), *The Kristeva Reader*, p. 89.

⁹ These are Kristeva’s examples. Bakhtin’s examples include Rabelais, Swift, and Dostoievski. See Kristeva, *Σημειωτική, Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, p. 152.

The dialogism of Menippean and carnivalesque discourses is clearly present in the narrative structure of the novella *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré*, which relates Kristeva's reading of Bakhtin to her study of the term novel.

As polyphonic in its structure, *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré* in turn points to Kristeva's belief that <<l'ordre textuel du roman relève plutôt de la parole que de l'écriture>> in <<Le texte clos>> in *Σημειωτική, Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (1969, 115). In relation to the book, *Le Texte du roman*, and the essay, <<Le mot, le dialogue et le roman>>, the essay, <<Le texte clos>>, in *Σημειωτική, Recherches pour une sémanalyse* would seem to be Kristeva's theory of the novel. The basis of that theory is, as is clear from the title of the book – semiotics – the science of signs. Her later theoretical writings, including her well-known distinction between what she calls the “semiotic” and the “symbolic” in *La révolution du langage poétique*, all evolve from her study of semiotics. Since her theory of the “semiotic” will provide the theoretical framework for this research on the relationship between her novels and the problematics of the term French feminist theory, the unique intellectual background that fosters her semiotic project cannot go unnoticed. This dates back to her Sofia days, in which her Eastern European training had equipped her with a solid grounding in Marxist theory, and with fluent Russian. Being fluent in Russian, she was able to introduce Bakhtin's work to Western intellectuals, as well as to gain first-hand knowledge of the Russian Formalists. Her experience of Marxism and (post)formalism was later reflected in her confidence in appropriating and transforming, in addition to learning from, the structuralist currents she met with in Paris in the late 1960s, for her own particular project. As Leon S. Roudiez has pointed out in his introduction to the English translation of the collection of her essays on a semiotic approach to literature and art, *Desire in Language*, the volume of Kristeva's essays in *Σημειωτική, Recherches pour une sémanalyse* “manifests both the presence of genuine structuralist thought and her own critical distance from its literary distortions” (1980, 3).

The word *sémanalyse* that Kristeva introduces into the second half of her book, defined as <<une critique du sens, de ses éléments et ses lois>>, is indicative of her attack on the rigid, scientific pretensions of a certain kind of structuralism (1969, 19). For her, <<Toute sémiotique [...] ne peut se faire que comme critique de la sémiotique>> (1969, 31):

Lieu mort des sciences, la sémiotique est la conscience de cette mort et la relance, avec cette conscience, du “scientifique”; moins (ou plus) qu'une science, elle est plutôt le lieu d'agressivité et de désillusion du discours scientifique à l'intérieur même de ce discours. On pourrait soutenir que la sémiotique est cette “science des idéologies” qu'on a pu suggérer en Russie révolutionnaire, mais aussi une idéologie des sciences (1969, 31-32).

Commenting on the force of Kristeva's work, Toril Moi writes in *The Kristeva Reader* that, in many ways, the “dynamic, process-oriented view of the sign [...] stands as the hallmark of

[Kristeva's] theoretical production" (1986, 2). Moi's remark brings out the interrelation between the book, *Σημειωτική, Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, and Kristeva's major theoretical work, *La révolution du langage poétique*, for a theory of the processes which constitute language is that which Kristeva presents in the latter. Moreover, there is a third element in both books which needs to be looked at in conjunction with Marxism and linguistics in the development of Kristeva's theories, that is, psychoanalysis.

Kristeva's frequent reference to Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis in *Σημειωτική, Recherches pour une sémanalyse* develops into the indispensable theoretical starting point for her exploration into the signifying process in *La révolution du langage poétique*. To summarise briefly what she means by the signifying process, it consists of the interaction between what she calls the "semiotic" and the "symbolic", two terms which she transforms from Lacan's distinction between the imaginary and the symbolic order (1974, 17-22).¹⁰ It must be stressed that these two terms are processes, not static entities. The semiotic is understood by her as linked to the pre-Oedipal primary processes: <<Il s'agit de ce que la psychanalyse freudienne indique en postulant le *frayage* et la *disposition* structurante des pulsions, mais aussi des *processus* dits *primaires* qui déplacent et condensent des énergies de même que leur inscription>> (1974, 23). As energy charges and psychical marks, the drives articulate what she calls <<une *chora*>> (1974, 23). She appropriates the term *chora* from Plato and redefines it as <<une totalité non expressive constituée par ces pulsions et leurs *stases* en une motilité aussi mouvementée que réglementée>>; it is neither a sign nor a position, but <<une articulation toute provisoire, essentiellement mobile, constituée de mouvements et de leurs *stases* éphémères>> (1974, 23). Within language, the semiotic rhythm is <<indifférent au langage, énigmatique et féminin [...]; il est musical, antérieur au juger, mais retenu par une seule garantie – la syntaxe>> (1974, 29). The functioning of that <<<air ou chant sous le texte>>> is allied with woman, whose body is <<[ce] qui médiatise la loi symbolique organisatrice des rapports sociaux, et [ce] qui devient le principe d'ordonnement de la *chora* sémiotique,¹¹ sur la voie de la destruction, de l'agressivité et de la mort>> (1974, 29, 27).

In relation to the semiotic *chora*, a rhythmic pulsion which constitutes the heterogeneous, disruptive dimensions of language, the symbolic law <<est assumé par un sujet qui veut dire (*bedeuten*)>>:

¹⁰ For a useful account of the similarities and differences between Kristeva's theories and Lacan's, see Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*, pp. 18-47. See also Allon White's exposition of the relationship between the rationalist project from Plato, Kant to Chomsky, Saussure and Kristeva's theories in "L'éclatement du sujet": *The Theoretical Work of Julia Kristeva*, pp. 1-3.

¹¹ According to Kristeva, <<En cherchant ce qui situe la mère dans l'espace symbolique, on retrouve le phallus (cf. J. Lacan, <La relation d'objet et les structures freudiennes>, in *Bulletin de psychologie*, avr. 1957, p. 446-450) que représente le père maternel, c'est-à-dire le grand-père du sujet (cf. M. C. Boons, <Le meurtre du père chez Freud>, in *L'Inconscient*, N° 5, janv.-mars 1968, p. 105-129)>> (1974, 27).

Ce sujet de l'énonciation qui vient en ligne directe de Husserl et Benveniste, introduit, par son intuition catégorielle, des *champs sémantiques* aussi bien que des *relations logiques* mais aussi *intersubjectives*, qui s'avèrent être à la fois intra et trans-linguistiques (1974, 20).

For the signification to be produced, the semiotic continuum must be split. The splitting of the semiotic *chora* is what Kristeva calls <<une phase *thétique*>>, which is the point at which the subject takes up a position, an identification (1974, 41-42). This process of breaking into the Symbolic, a process to which the semiotic gives rise, is that which leads up to the mirror stage. Following Lacan, who posits that the mirror stage is where the child recognises itself as a separate subject through the other of its image, Kristeva posits that the mirror phase is the first step which permits <<la constitution de tout objet désormais détaché de la *chora* sémiotique>> (1974, 44). The Oedipal phase, with its threat of castration, is the moment in which the process of separation or splitting is fully achieved. While the semiotic *chora* will be more or less successfully repressed and can be perceived only as within symbolic language when the subject has entered into the symbolic order, it, at times, breaches the boundaries of the Symbolic in privileged moments of social transgression when it, like the repressed, seeks to intervene into the Symbolic to subvert its operations. Finding itself in a position which is at once subversive of and dependent on the law, the Kristevan subject is a subject-in-process and is given a space in representation in the poetic language of modernist and avant-garde discourses.

Her psycho-linguistic understanding of language in *La révolution du langage poétique* is obviously inseparable from her study of Bakhtin's work in <<Le mot, le dialogue et le roman>>. The Bakhtinian terms, "dialogism" and "carnivalism", in <<Le mot, le dialogue et le roman>> turn into allusions to the kind of textual play which she analyses through the concepts of the "semiotic", the "symbolic" and the *chora* in *La révolution du langage poétique*. Just as Bakhtin studies Menippean discourse, within which the polyphonic novel and the monological novel constitute the signifying process, so Kristeva analyses the signifying process through two features of the text, a genotext and a phenotext, as constituted by poetic language. What she calls <<un géno-texte>> can be seen in language, but is not linguistic. Rather, it is <<un *procès* qui tend à articuler dans des structures éphémères (labiles, menacées par les charges pulsionnelles, <quanta> plutôt que <marques>) et non-signifiantes (dispositifs sans double articulation)>> (1974, 83). The term <<phéno-texte>>, on the other hand, denotes <<le langage qui dessert la communication et que la linguistique décrit en <compétence> et en <performance>>> (1974, 84). In her view, this heterogeneous process accounts for the way all signifying practices are generated, albeit that <<toute pratique signifiante n'embrasse pas la totalité infinie>> of that process (1974, 84-85). Fiction, for instance, was mainly a phenotext in its traditional narrative guise, for it was

dominated by the symbolic, but has increasingly been affected by the semiotic in recent times. Evidence of the genotext playing a greater role in fiction is the theme of her essays, <<D'une identité l'autre>> and <<Polylogue>>, in *Polylogue*.

In <<D'une identité l'autre>>, she discusses the novel *D'un château l'autre* by Louis-Ferdinand Céline. Two phenomena, among others, in the novel are the focus of her examination of <<le fonctionnement du langage poétique et de son sujet en procès>>: <<les rythmes phrastiques et les mots obscènes>> (1977, 166). Not only do these two phenomena constitute a particularity of Céline's discourse, but also, though they function differently, they <<concernent des opérations constitutives de la conscience jugeante (donc de l'identité) en perturbant sa netteté en même temps que la désignation d'un objet (l'objectité)>> (1977, 166). Her argument regards the impossibility of the existence of the object <<([l'objet] d'amour ou transcendantal)>> in Céline's rhythmic discourse. This object, through which the <<émotion>>, that is, <<la pulsion non sémantisée qui précède et excède le sens>>, of which Céline speaks, flows, is the precursor to her work on abjection (1977, 167-168). Before proceeding to her research on identity in psychoanalysis through the concept of the abject, which is of interest in the first half of this thesis, attention should be given to her study of discourses that call up a crisis in identity. This has to do with her concept of poetic language, whose function she aims to interpret in her analysis of Céline's novel and on which she sets forth in *La révolution du langage poétique*.

The phrase, poetic language, is introduced by Russian formalists to denote what Leon S. Roudiez terms "almost an otherness of language"¹² in his reading of Kristeva's concept of it. It is specifically associated with Ossip Brik, who founded the Society for the Study of Poetic Language in Moscow in 1917. For Brik, poetic language stands in opposition to language whose basic purpose is communication, and, while not involving a deviation from the norm of language, it includes what he and others call transrational language. As Leon S. Roudiez explains,

[poetic language] is the language of materiality as opposed to transparency (where the word is forgotten for the sake of the object or concept designated,) a language in which the writer's effort is less to deal rationally with those objects or concepts words seem to encase than to work, consciously or not, with the sounds and rhythms of words in transrational fashion.¹³

Applying the concept of poetic language to textual analysis, Kristeva sees literary practice <<comme exploration et découverte des possibilités du langage>>, in which the subject is liberated from <<certaines réseaux linguistiques (psychiques, sociaux)>> (1969, 178-179). The identity of the signifying subject thus breaks down in the discourse of poetic language.

¹² Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p. 5.

¹³ Ibid.

Examples of poetic language in Kristeva's work are extensive but, for the purposes of our discussion about the term novel, can be restricted to Céline's *D'un château l'autre* and Philippe Sollers's *H*.

Compared with Céline's *D'un château l'autre*, Philippe Sollers's *H* is poetic language from the first line of Kristeva's analysis of it in <<Polylogue>>:

H: une musique qui s'écrit en langue et se raisonne elle-même, sans arrêt et jusqu'à l'épuisement du sens saturé, débordant, fulgurant. *H* ne demande rien: aucun déchiffrement en tout cas, aucun commentaire, aucun complément philosophique, théorique, politique qui aurait été laissé en suspens, non vu, oublié (1977, 173).

Indecipherable, *H* can only be read when one lets oneself be carried along by its unpunctuated, sentence fragments or what Kristeva calls music (1977, 180-181). This rhythm of the text is <<la poly-logique du sujet parlant>> (1977, 192). It is an enunciation of whatever the speaking subject pleases, but this necessarily implies that the speaking subject <<a un inconscient qui le frappe comme rythme-intonation-musique, avant de le dissoudre dans un éclatement cellulaire, biologique, en même temps que subjectif, symbolique, social>> (1977, 198). Having undergone that process so as to return to its former position and give voice to its poly-logic, the speaking subject is what Kristeva calls <<un matérialiste qui parle>> (1977, 198). By that, she means the loss of the self due to its immersion in the material and historical process, which enables it to reconstitute itself, regain its unity and rhythmically pronounce its own dissolution as well as its return (1977, 198). This subject-in-process in the discourse of poetic language in her discussion of the role of the genotext in novel later becomes the figure of the adolescent in her psychoanalytic analysis of novelistic writing in <<Le roman adolescent>> in *Les nouvelles maladies de l'âme*.

The very genre of the novel, as she suggests in <<Le roman adolescent>>, <<est largement tributaire [...] d'une économie <adolescente> de l'écriture>>, whose effect <<nous permettrait de retrouver cet état d'inachèvement, aussi dépressif que jubilatoire, auquel nous devons une partie du plaisir dit esthétique>> (1993, 209). Her definition of adolescence then is less a developmental stage than an open psychic structure. Although <<l'écriture de l'adolescent>> can be writing by adolescents, when she speaks about it, she means writing enquiring <<sur le rôle de l'imaginaire dans le contre-transfert et sur son efficacité dans la cure pour le patient comme pour l'analyste>> (1993, 204). Here, understanding her concept of the figure of the adolescent, as reflected in her definition of adolescence, requires taking account of her psychoanalytic practice, which results from her speculation that psychoanalysis is <<la conséquence logique de [mes] interrogations initiales>>.¹⁴ Her initial questioning refers to her attempt to understand the signifying process in *La révolution du langage poétique*, in which her application of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis to her

¹⁴ Kristeva, <<Mémoire>>, *L'Infini* 1 (1983), p.45.

linguistic theory comes to light. In order to provide a material basis for her initial questioning, she underwent psychoanalytic training from about 1974, the year of the publication of *La révolution du langage poétique*, to 1977 and started her psychoanalytic practice in 1979. Thereafter, psychoanalysis, theoretically and practically, has allowed her to pursue her initial questioning because it is <<[le lieu] de l'abjection maximale, [le] lieu de recueil de l'horreur privée qui ne peut être levée que par un déplacement infini-indéfini dans la parole et ses effets>> (1983, 45), remarks she in her autobiographical essay, <<Mémoire>>, in *L'Infini*. As she goes on to explain,

Au-delà de l'incertitude ou des perversités des institutions analytiques, la psychanalyse me semble être la version laïque, la seule, de cette recherche de la vérité de l'être parlant que la religion, par ailleurs, emblématise chez certains de mes contemporains et amis. Mon préjugé, à moi, serait de croire que Dieu est analysable. Infiniment (1983, 45).

This statement about the importance of psychoanalysis for her project conveys explicitly her desire for tracking and tracing a beginning.

When and how, then, does the adolescent novel begin? According to her, it begins with Antoine de la Sale's *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré*, in which the theme of the adolescent is developed through the love of a page. Western novels written right after the Middle Ages follow along that line and constitute <<la trame même de la psychologie romanesque>> (1993, 210). From being a perfect example of the novel as a semiotic practice to being representative of novelistic psychology, Antoine de la Sale's *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré* bears witness to the transition from linguistics to psychoanalysis in Kristeva's work on novel. Yet ambivalence as a novelistic quality remains; the situation of the adolescent and his world replaces the dialogue between writing and the text as responsible for generating ambivalence. With respect to the adolescent, Jehan de Saintré the page, it is his particular relationship with the Lady and the Lady's lover, the Abbot, that will lead to the ambivalent qualities of the novel. Betrayal is the theme of that particular relationship, which is the element that centres this first French prose novel (that is, neither an epic nor a courtly lyric) on the adolescent structure. In the novel, young Jehan is in love with the Lady, who, however, betrays her young suitor by saying one thing to him and another to the Court via the Abbot. The interest of the novel is that the betrayed page will learn of the duplicity of adolescence as time goes on and betray the Lady in the end, as <<Son amour incestueux pour la Dame va se transformer en une identification imaginaire avec elle>> (1993, 212). Ambivalence resides in this portrayal of the adolescent who assimilates his incestuous object's, the Lady's, discourse through imaginary identification, only to turn it against her. It is at this point the novel makes a break with the courtly tradition.

In the courtly tradition, betrayal, according to Kristeva, <<déshonore les personnages et met fin au texte>> (1993, 213). The hero and the villain, who are the counterparts of the

page, in the courtly romance <<se poursuivent d'une hostilité inconciliable et sans compromis possible>> (1993, 213). The page and his world, on the contrary, are full of ambiguities and contradictions. As Kristeva recounts,

Enfant et guerrier, page et héros, trompé par la Dame mais vainqueur des soldats, soigné et trahi, amant de la Dame et aimé par le Roi ou par son frère d'armes Boucicault, jamais entièrement masculin, enfant-amant de la Dame, mais aussi camarade-ami de ses maîtres ou de son frère dont il partage également le lit – Saintré est l'androgyné accompli, le pervers innocent et justifié (1993, 213).

The birth of the novel is thus tied to ambivalence, a quality which is less characteristic of the epic or the courtly romance. For Kristeva, ambivalence as a novelistic quality has nourished psychology. In this case, she argues, <<sans la feinte et la trahison, il n'y a pas de psychologie>> (1993, 213). The adolescent novel is the product of the writer's capability to betray his parents, to free up his superego (1993, 213). By creating the character of Jehan de Saintré, who is <<une figure de l'inachèvement qui est aussi celle de tous les possibles, du <tout est possible>>> (1993, 213), Antoine de la Sale is the writer as adolescent.

At issue in this concept of the writer as adolescent is the problem of form. The adolescent as <<l'androgyné accompli>> reflects what Witold Gombrowicz, one of Kristeva's examples of modern novelists as adolescents, glorifies as <<l'informe et l'inférieur, l'immature>> (1993, 213, 226).¹⁵ The essential characteristics of the adolescent as <<l'informe et l'inférieur, l'immature>> then make his creator, who identifies with him, the embodiment of the Kristevan subject who is a subject-in-process in Kristeva's discussion of the functioning of poetic language. To this formless, poly-logic of the speaking subject can be added the issue of sexual identity, an issue which will be the object of analysis in the second half of this thesis. For the figure of the adolescent, with his indecisive body that <<[n'est] jamais entièrement masculin>>, problematises the notion of sexual difference (1993, 213, 215). Like the figure of the adolescent, the Kristevan subject is sexually undifferentiated: associated by Kristeva with a law before the law, a distant space, the maternal body, the feminine and woman,¹⁶ the Kristevan subject is also dependent on the law, the masculine (1974, 22-30). The signification of the feminine in Kristeva's theorisation of the semiotic is, however, not identical to that given by patriarchy,¹⁷ which tells women the appropriate, natural form of behaviour for them. Nor does she identify the masculine with the biological man. Rather, the difference between the sexes is produced through signifying

¹⁵ Gombrowicz, *Journal 1953-1956*, p. 171.

¹⁶ I shall further discuss the controversy of the *chora* and the textuality of sex in part two of this thesis: Sex and Text.

¹⁷ "Patriarchy" is, as Sara Mills and Lynne Pearce define in *Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading*, "that social organization which produces and guarantees superior status for the male and inferior for the female. It is a political concept in that it governs power-structured relationships in which one group is controlled by another" (1996, 310).

practices, thereby becoming what Mary Eagleton calls “a matter of the structuring of a genderless libido in and through patriarchal discourse” in her discussion about “Anglo-American feminism/French feminism” in *Feminist Literary Criticism* (1996, 10).

Novelistic subjectivity continues to be a question for Kristeva in her psychoanalytic study of time as conveyed by the work of the “modernist” novelist Marcel Proust in *Le temps sensible: Proust et l'expérience littéraire*. She suggests that <<le désir du <je> romanesque>> in Proust’s work <<vise toujours et au-delà des apparences le seul Être du temps>>, thereby escaping from its objects (1994, 386). The *I* of the narrator as a pure form, but as the absolute, which is present only in this way, is extremely vast: <<il est anthropomorphe mais divin, personne humaine mais archétypale, au cœur des passions subtiles qu’elle dépasse superbement>> (1994, 387). At this point the Kristevan concept of the formless, poly-logic of the speaking subject is present in this Proustian *I* of the narrator. The *I* of the narrator as formless, poly-logic in representation results from its search for time, <<mais à condition qu’il soit perdu-gaspillé et détourné>> (1994, 386), in the novel *Contre Sainte-Beuve*. For, in writing that novel, Proust is, in Kristeva’s view, interested in opening up <<l’espace des figures>> (1994, 386). The way in which he depicts that space is to build it with words, metaphors, sentences, and characters. Time as such is embodied in <<la mémoire involontaire qui remonte sa course et entame l’apparence des signes pour y chercher des vibrations, impressions, sensations>> rather than in its linear meaning (1994, 386). This novel in search of time, though not the final object of analysis in Kristeva’s work on novel, ends our discussion of the term novel as defined by Kristeva, since it leads into Kristeva’s actual novels, *Les Samouraïs* (1990), *Le vieil homme et les loups* (1991), and *Possessions* (1996) that put theory into practice.

The beginning of that connection is informed by the question Proust asks himself in the course of writing *Contre Sainte-Beuve*: <<Faut-il en faire | un roman, une étude philosophique?>> (1994, 386)¹⁸ It is in coming across that question that Kristeva sets aside theoretical writing and turns to fiction.¹⁹ Yet the distinction between theory and fiction is problematic for her. In an interview with Elisabeth Bêlorgey on her first novel *Les Samouraïs*, for instance, she responds to Bêlorgey’s question of how she accounts for her shift from theory to the novel with the observation: <<C’est un problème éternel de savoir comment traiter un sujet qui nous préoccupe, soit de manière théorique ou fictionnelle. Est-ce qu’il y a un choix? Est-ce qu’il est légitime de pencher pour l’un ou pour l’autre des discours?>>²⁰ Given this, how can her novels that may be a different form of her theoretical

¹⁸ Proust, *Cahier de 1908*, édité par Ph. Kolb, n° 11, p. 61.

¹⁹ Kristeva, <<A propos des Samouraïs>>, *L’Infini* 30 (1990), p. 56.

²⁰ Ibid.

works be read? Such a question, on which this whole thesis must work, involves a politics of interpretation, of which a summary of her novels serves as an example.

The novel *Les Samouraïs* employs the two narrators Olga Morena and Joëlle Cabarus to show readers the political disillusion and ferment of a generation in post-war France. It thus can be seen as a documentary, or as Kristeva's memoirs of the Parisian intellectuals of the late 1960s. Weaving together the philosophy of many of the 20th-century's most influential minds, such as Sartre, Lacan, Derrida, Barthes, Althusser and Lévi-Strauss, into the love stories of Olga, Hervé Sinteuil (whose real name is Hervé de Montlaur), Martin Cazenave, Marie-Paule Longueville, Carole Benedetti and a few others, in the words of Linda Scharf, it "illuminates both the constantly shifting terrain of human relationships and the manifold psychological entanglements of the Left Bank intellectuals".²¹ Over a twenty-five year period, the characters in the novel experience countless battles involving love, depression, maternity and disease, while they move from Paris to China to New York and back to Paris.

Following this autobiographical novel about the intellectual history of her generation, Kristeva writes the allegorical novel *Le vieil homme et les loups* that, according to herself, reveals "a part of the secret of [her] profound debt to [her] father and to suffering in Bulgaria".²² The fictional double of her father is the Old Man, who is a professor of Latin. He and the couple Alba Ram and Vespasien, as Bernard Sichère suggests in his reading of the novel, bring readers to <<une dimension sombre et négative, un regard plus que pessimiste sur ce monde>> than the one in *Les Samouraïs*.²³ On the other hand, the newspaper reporter and amateur detective Stéphanie Delacour counterbalances the overarching negativity of the novel with truth-seeking. These opposite poles of what Kristeva describes as a contemporary <<crise de civilisation>>²⁴ are embodied in the city, Santa Barbara, in the novel, a city which continues to be the setting for "the collapse of the East and the malaise and banality of the West"²⁵ in her detective novel *Possessions*.

Part mystery and part meditation, *Possessions* opens with the gruesome discovery of the decapitated body of gifted translator Gloria Harrison. It features Stéphanie Delacour's return to the corrupt seaside resort, Santa Barbara, to participate in the investigation of her friend Gloria's murder. The critic Martha Lewis gives the following interpretation of the novel,

we read between the lines some of the sorrows and dilemmas that are the focus of Kristeva's own life and work: motherhood and the complex relationship between

²¹ See the jacket illustration of English translation of *Les Samouraïs: The Samurai*.

²² Ross Guberman, "Julia Kristeva Speaks Out", in *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, p. 258.

²³ Kristeva, <<*Roman noir et temps présent*>>, *L'Infini* 37 (1992), p. 75.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

²⁵ Ross Guberman, "Introduction" to the English translation of Kristeva's <<*Roman noir et temps présent*>>: "Interview: The Old Man and the Wolves", in *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, p. 163.

mother and child; art and music; psychoanalysis; mourning and melancholia; language; the powers of horror; and the hostility aroused by a competent, gifted, and attractive woman who is at once devotedly maternal and capable of sexual passion.²⁶

This review of the novel presents it as Kristeva's pseudo-autobiography, which can be related to the suggestion that her first two novels are highly autobiographical, as well as a fictional form of her theoretical works. In exemplifying the idea of a politics of interpretation, this review also brings us back to the question of whether there is a boundary between theory and fiction.

The implication that theory can appear in the form of a novel and a novel can appear in the form of theory points to a dialogical relationship between these genres. This is the premise on which the objective of this thesis shall be built: how Kristeva re-inscribes her theory of love, melancholia, abjection, time, maternity, and body in her novels. Yet why do we select these concepts out of Kristeva's theories? The answer to that question lies in the title of the second half of this thesis, *revisiting French feminist theory*, which aims to investigate how Kristeva's problematic status as a French feminist can be situated in relation to post-colonial (feminist) theorists and critics, and to the other two French feminist theorists, Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray. The former is the focus of attention in part one of this thesis, which starts with a discussion about the relationship between French feminist theory and post-colonial (feminist) theory. The latter, in which Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva make up the "Holy Trinity of French feminist theory",²⁷ is crucial for a study of the term French feminist theory. This study shall constitute part two of this thesis, of which the relationship between French feminist theory and Anglo-American feminism is the main issue. Through probing these aspects of the way Kristeva's feminist identity works in the dialogue between her theories and her fictional works, which remain a relatively unexplored territory in Kristeva scholarship, this research hopes to make a contribution to a new understanding of the term French feminist theory, an alternative view of Kristeva's theories, and above all an original analysis of Kristeva's novels.

²⁶ See the jacket illustration of English translation of *Possessions: Possessions*.

²⁷ Toril Moi (ed), *French Feminist Thought*, p. 5.

AN INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE: LOOKING IN THE MIRROR FRENCH FEMINIST THEORY OR POST-COLONIAL (FEMINIST) THEORY?

In order to revisit French feminist theory through reading Kristeva's novels, it is necessary to define the term French feminist theory. Among the Anglophone feminist reading public, it is obvious that French feminist theory, which becomes representative of French feminism, means writings by Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, whom Toril Moi considers "major French feminist theorists".¹ The problem with this definition is that none of these women writers claims any kind of unqualified relation to feminism, not to mention the fact that none of them was born in France. Thus, French feminist theory is not theory of French feminism that advances the cause of women in France² but what Nancy Fraser calls "a curious synecdochic reduction" of French feminism.³ Such a representation of French feminist theory, which obscures the theoretical positions of feminist thought in France, demands an explanation. This chapter addresses the problematics of French feminist theory and its relation to post-colonial (feminist) theory as a foundation on which the study of the relationship between Kristeva's theory of love, of melancholia and of abjection, and her novels in the first, second and third chapters of this thesis should be built.

French feminist theory as a misrepresentation of itself involves the superficial conflict between Anglo-American feminism and French feminism, on which I shall further expound in the introduction to part two of this thesis. Here, however, I shall briefly review the French feminist Christine Delphy's essay "The Invention of French Feminism: An Essential Move", which is a sound, although provocative, example of French feminist theory as misrepresented. For it demonstrates how "'French Feminism' [is] a fabrication of American, and more widely, English speaking scholars" (1995, 196). These scholars, according to Delphy, have taken as the core of French feminism "a certain overtly antifeminist political trend called 'Psyche et po [...]' to the detriment of what is considered by [themselves] as well as French feminist historians [...] to be the core of the feminist movement" (1995, 191-192).⁴ In constructing "French Feminism" or French feminist theory, they "have also consistently conflated 'women writers' with 'women's

¹ Moi, "Introduction" to *French Feminist Thought*, p. 5. The first feminist critic to name Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva as "The French Feminists" is, however, Jane Gallop; she introduces them as the daughters of psychoanalysis to her American audience in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: The Daughter's Seduction*.

² For a relatively accurate version of French feminism as it is currently seen, see, for instance, Claire Duchen's *Feminism in France: From May '68 to Mitterrand* and *French Connections: Voices from the Women's Movement in France*; Dorothy Kauffmann-McCall's "Politics of Difference: The Women's Movement in France from 1968 to Mitterrand".

³ Fraser, "Introduction" to *Revaluing French Feminism*, p. 1.

⁴ See my discussion about "Psyche et po" in this chapter, pp. 16-17.

movement' [...], thus eliminating the activist dimension of that movement" (1995, 192). This "series of distortions and voluntary or involuntary errors about what was happening in France from the mid-seventies on" are well-known facts in the Anglo-American world of Women's Studies, but are not seen as a problem (1995, 196). Why? Delphy, concurring with the feminist critics Claire Moses and Judith Ezekiel, sees an imperialism at work that is related to domestic agendas in the Anglo-American construction of "French Feminism" or French feminist theory: "'Opponents have taken as their targets, not its American agents, but the French themselves' (Ezekiel); and 'the French ... are blamed for aspects of ourselves that we do not like but do not take responsibility for (like our racism and our classism)' (Moses 1992a)" (1995, 192).⁵

The major proponent of "French Feminism" or French feminist theory, Toril Moi, however, has a different answer to Delphy's question of why Anglo-American feminists would proclaim the so-called non-feminists Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva to be the figureheads of women's movement in France. She asserts in *French Feminist Thought: A Reader* that, insofar as the work of the French feminists, Christine Delphy, Monique Plaza and "the many other women who take up positions similar to theirs", emphasises "the historical and social reality of women's experience", it is "relatively accessible to other Western feminists" (1987, 6). The fact that these aforementioned French feminists are less frequently translated and less well known in English-speaking countries is precisely because of their relative similarity to Anglo-American feminists, although this does not mean that they "would agree with an empiricist and positivist hypostatisation of the category of experience" (1987, 6). In other words, they have "been perceived as lacking in exotic difference" that Anglo-American feminists find in Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva (1987, 6). For Anglo-American feminists then, difference – not in the sense of its battle with "equality" within the domain of feminism but in its literal sense – is that which matters in the construction or rather the invention of "French Feminism" or French feminist theory if we are to follow Moi's thesis. In fact, Elaine Millard, Sara Mills and Lynne Pearce in *Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading* have endorsed this view by suggesting that French feminist theory has "caused a productive crisis in Anglo-American feminist theory (broadly speaking, 'images of women criticism', authentic realism, sexual politics)" (1996, 153).

One result of the impingement French feminist theory has on Anglo-American feminist theory, according to Millard, Mills and Pearce, is the emergence of post-colonial feminist theory: "[the work of Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva] has now been widely appropriated by Anglo-American feminist theory and put to work for feminist purposes; for example in lesbian feminist

⁵ See Moses, "'French Feminism' in U.S. Academic Discourse", a paper presented at the Berkshire Conference on Women's History, 12 June 1992, and Ezekiel's comments on her paper.

criticism and post-colonial feminist criticism" (1996, 177). This observation on the relationship between post-colonial feminist theory and French feminist theory informs the title of this chapter. Yet the question mark in the title of this chapter does not wholly credit the idea that post-colonial feminist theory reproduces French feminist theory, as the "or" suggests. This is also Millard, Mills and Pearce's point when they remark that post-colonial feminist theory has put French feminist theory "to work for feminist purposes". Accordingly, a definition of "feminist" is crucial in comprehending the correlation between French feminist theory and post-colonial feminist theory; and the answer is more complicated than what the dictionary says about "feminist".

One of the latest definitions of "feminist" in this instance is Kelly Oliver's comparison of the English-speaking scholars' perceptions of it with the French scholars' in *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*:

When American theorists and practitioners talk about feminism they refer to a multifaceted conglomerate of different views and strategies that cannot be easily reduced to a single element. When French theorists and practitioners talk about feminism, however, they are referring to a specific political movement in France. So when "The French Feminists" [namely, Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva] refuse to be identified as feminists this does not mean that they would not identify with some of the goals and strategies of feminism in the American context. What they are rejecting is a specific movement in France that many of them think engages in, and merely replicates, oppressive bourgeois logics and strategies for gaining power. "Feminism" does not refer to the same thing on both sides of the Atlantic (1993, 164).

This explanation of what feminism means for Anglo-American feminists and for French feminists obviates the need to defend the non-feminist and anti-feminist elements of French feminist theory, because those elements are not what they appear. On the other hand, the contention that the domain of French feminist theory lies outside the Anglo-American version of "French feminism" becomes questionable. What then constitutes the "specific movement in France" or, as Delphy has told us, the "antifeminist political trend called 'Psych et po'" that suggests feminism to "The French feminists"?

Dorothy Kaufmann-McCall in "Politics of Difference: The Women's Movement in France from May 1968 to Mitterrand" recounts the history of Psych et po, one of the groups in the *Mouvement de Libération des Femmes* or MLF as it became popularly known. Led by Antoinette Fouque, a practicing Lacanian psychoanalyst, the group "had set itself clearly apart from the others [in the MLF] by its unified, hierarchical structure and its distinctive focus" as early as 1971 (1983, 284). By distinctive focus, Kaufmann-McCall is referring to the originality of Psych et po that "lay in its incorporation of psychoanalysis into the theory and practice of the group" (1983, 284). Influenced by the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan, who was Antoinette Fouque's analyst, the women of Psych et po see reality as structured like a language.

They are concerned with the misogynist unconscious that they claim has repressed the feminine rather than with the historical oppression of women that other French feminists crusade against. Women, they argue, “are not invisible in history, as [those other] feminists contend, but radically absent, since only the phallus, understood as the fundamental signifier of the unconscious, has been represented in the libidinal economy of culture” (1983, 285), writes Kaufmann-McCall. Consequently, while other French feminists reject the notion of difference because of its essentialist definitions of women that prevent women from leading lives as autonomous individuals, they argue, in the words of Kaufmann-McCall, “it is precisely woman’s difference, repressed by what they call the phallic order of patriarchy, that is the source of her potential liberation” (1983, 285). The way in which a woman can come into contact with “the source of her potential liberation” is, as Kaufmann-McCall concludes in her report on *Psyche et po*, “through the psychoanalytic exploration of the unconscious and its processes of signification” (1983, 285).

The women of *Psych et po*’s quest for a discourse expressive of feminine specificity is taken up by the French feminist theorists, Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva, who consider themselves beyond or opposed to the egalitarian emphasis of political feminists.⁶ It is in the formal literary revolution of the avant-garde that the French feminist theorists find feminine specificity, a finding which they equate with social transformation. Yet such an equation is problematic and the first to challenge this view of literary revolution as transformative is the feminist post-colonial theorist and critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. As she asks in her article, “French Feminism in an International Frame”, “is the relationship between ‘literature and life’ so unproblematic [...]?” (1981, 161) This is related to her reading of Kristeva’s *Des Chinoises* in the article, a reading which puts her in imaginary dialogue with Kristeva, one of the French feminist theorists. In this sense, the book *Des Chinoises* is significant for establishing the relationship between French feminist theory and post-colonial feminist theory.

What in *Des Chinoises* then prompts Spivak to criticise French feminist theory? According to Spivak herself, it mirrors her long-term interest in how to link the First-World academic feminist and the Third-World impoverished woman. This is understood by Mary Eagleton in her introduction to Spivak’s article as originating from Spivak’s own history of being born in India and educated in the States, an experience which becomes Spivak’s criteria for

⁶ For discussions of the major theoretical issues in the women’s movement in France from May 1968 to Mitterrand, see Elaine Marks, “Women and Literature in France”; Carolyn Greenstein Burke, “Report from Paris: Women’s Writing and the Women’s Movement”; Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (eds), *New French Feminisms*.

measuring Western feminism.⁷ *Des Chinoises*, in Spivak's view, is representative of her "own ideological victimage, 'naturalization' transformed into privilege" (1981, 157). To put it another way, she finds Kristeva "feeling privileged as a woman" in representing Chinese women (1981, 157), a characteristic which suggests that *Des Chinoises* is a product of what Leela Gandhi, in her reading of Spivak's article, calls "the narcissism of the liberal-feminist investigator" rather than a narrative of the object of its investigation.⁸ This distance between "'the [informant Kristeva's] world' [and] her 'own sense of the world she writes about'" in *Des Chinoises* is, for Spivak, embodied in Kristeva's gaze as it surveys a crowd of Chinese women in Huxian Square (1981, 156).

In that scene in *Des Chinoises*, Kristeva writes,

Une foule immense est assise sous le soleil: elle nous attend sans mot, sans mouvement. Des yeux calmes, même pas curieux, mais légèrement amusés ou anxieux, en tout cas perçants, et sûrs d'appartenir à une communauté avec laquelle nous n'aurons jamais rien à voir (1974, 13-14).

Her perceptions of the silent Chinese women's world point to Spivak's idea of distance. This is reinforced by her question, <<Qui parle donc, face au regard des paysans de Huxian?>> (1974, 17) While the object of her question is the silent Chinese women's identity, in Spivak's reading of *Des Chinoises*, it "is about her *own* identity rather than theirs" (1981, 158), for it reminds Spivak of a certain group of thinkers. As Spivak puts it in "French Feminism in an International Frame",

This too might be characteristic of the group of thinkers to whom I have, most generally, attached her. In spite of their occasional interest in touching the *other* of the West, of metaphysics, of capitalism, their repeated question is obsessively self-centered: if we are not what official history and philosophy say we are, who then are we (not), how are we (not)? (1981, 158-159)

By engaging herself in imaginary conversation with Kristeva, Spivak exposes the discrepancy between the observed Chinese women's silence and the observing French feminist's fluency. As she goes on interrupting Kristeva's musing over Chinese women, which characterises her style in the article, she makes a point that Leela Gandhi values in *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*: "we never hear the object(s) of Kristeva's investigation represent themselves"

⁷ Eagleton (ed), *Feminist Literary Criticism*, pp. 83-84. For articles on some of the problems with Western feminism, see, for instance, Maria Lugones and Elizabeth Spelman, "Have we got a theory for you? Feminist theory, cultural imperialism and the demand for 'the woman's voice'"; Rosemary Hennessy and Rajeswari Mohan, "The construction of women in three popular texts of empire: towards a critique of materialist feminism"; Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses".

⁸ See Gandhi's discussion about Spivak's analysis of Kristeva's *Des Chinoises* in *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 86-87.

(1998, 87). The otherness of the Third World women in this book about Kristeva's own identity is thus the characteristic of Western theory in reality, a characteristic which is tied to the group of thinkers whom Spivak considers self-centred:

Derrida, Lyotard, Deleuze and the like, [who] have at one time or another been interested in reaching out to all that is not the West, because they have, in one way or another, questioned the millennially cherished excellences of Western metaphysics: the sovereignty of the subject's intention, the power of predication and so on (1981, 157).

This disclosure of the backdrop for the theoretician's interest in "reaching out to all that is not the West" as a desire to search for how to break out of the violence of Western metaphysics suggests that reading the work of privileged informants on the Third World requires a trained readership more or less familiar with Western theory.

The fact that *Des Chinoises* can only be deciphered by trained readers reiterates the idea that the object of its investigation is the First World academic feminist rather than the Third World impoverished woman; this leads into the theme of narcissism that is the focus of the first chapter of this thesis. In relation to Kristeva's novels, the way in which privileged informants' representation of others becomes a representation of themselves appears in the story of the heroine Olga Morena in *Les Samourais* and that of the protagonist Stéphanie Delacour in *Le vieil homme et les loups* and *Possessions*. Just as Olga describes her visit to China in the manner of the theorist Kristeva in *Des Chinoises*, so Stéphanie investigates the corruption of the East from the perspective of a Westerner. These examples of the narcissism of the privileged informants will serve as a starting point for an exploration into Kristeva's theory of love in the context of the relationship between French feminist theory and post-colonial (feminist) theory.

An analysis of the psychoanalysis of love that Kristeva begins to develop in *Histoires d'amour* and continues in *Soleil noir, dépression et mélancolie*, as we shall see, is inseparable from the concept of melancholia. For the existence of love, in psychoanalytic terms, is a reflection of the absence of melancholia, and vice versa. This will lead into the discussion about the theme of melancholia in Kristeva's novels in the second chapter of this thesis, in which an emphasis will be put on the post-colonial critic David Punter's *Postcolonial Imaginings: Fictions of a New World Order*. In that book, Punter studies, among others, the relationship between post-colonial literature and melancholy, a study which, I shall argue, conveys the presence of Kristeva's theory of melancholia. This aspect of the relationship between French feminist theory and post-colonial theory involves the idea of writers or storytellers as a threat, who "challenge the boundaries of what it is possible to remember" (2000, 128), to quote Punter. As Punter explains,

because we are dealing in the 'literary', the very nature of remembering, of 'remembrance' – which is bound on one side to memory and on the other to mourning –

is itself a challenge and a potential terror, an activity that will be perceived and codified, as required by the state machine, under the heading of the 'terroristic'; terrorists are those, we might say specifically in a postcolonial era, who will not call a close to history, those who continue to be inspired by past configurations and conflagrations, who refuse to accept that the past moment can be surpassed, those whose desperation, although it tells and signifies a story, will not be bought off by the alternative narratives so readily on offer from the consensus of the neocolonisers (2000, 128).

Like storytellers of post-colonial literature, Kristeva reproduces specific moments of history in her novels, albeit that none of them are post-colonial in the sense of what Punter calls "a postcolonial era" (2000, 128). In *Les Samourais*, this is embodied in the representation of May 1968, which centres on Parisian intellectuals and is therefore "remembrance" of the colonial mentality of Western theory. In *Le vieil homme et les loups*, this is embodied in the story of the Old Man whom the inhabitants of Santa Barbara exclude from their community because of the fact that he is cultivated, which presents the story itself as "remembrance" of Western civilisation. In *Possessions*, this is embodied in the murder of the heroine Gloria Harrison, a crime which represents the death of humanity and is, conversely, "remembrance" of Western humanism. Through the act of "remembrance", Kristeva highlights the barbarism of contemporary world, which constitutes her fictional representation of the harmful effects of melancholia. Although this does not apply to her representation of May 1968, the historical moment is associated by her with the love story of the protagonists Martin Cazenave and Carole Benedetti, whose problematic relationship leads them to suffering from melancholia.

In terms of the European ethos in the novels, it brings us back to the French feminist theorists' elitist trait that, as Spivak has noted, limits the readership of French feminist theory. This readership can be divided into those who defend the work of the French feminist theorists and those who refine it in the 1990s. The former, according to Millard, Mills, and Pearce, "are working hard to explicate Kristeva, Irigaray *et al.*, in a way that will make them acceptable and intelligible to the feminist community at large" and the latter take up "the challenge posed by this psychoanalytic work to make explicit the tension between the subject and her insertion in language within a historical framework and to effect a reconciliation between theories of the structure of the psyche and material existence".⁹ By problematising the relationship between what Spivak calls "literature and life", the latter carry on the work of Spivak. Among them, Anne

⁹ *Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading*, p. 180. For feminists who evaluate the work of the French feminist theorists, see, for instance, Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* and Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*. For feminists who attempt to develop a materialist feminist psychoanalytic analysis of the subject, see, amongst others, Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* and Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest*.

McClintock can be compared with Spivak. Her writing, however, does not concern itself with the non-elite colonised subject, which Spivak terms “the subaltern subject”¹⁰ in her questioning of the tendency in poststructuralist theory to reintroduce the European Self at the expense of the colonised Other at the very moment when it is seemingly destabilising the Self; its importance lies in mapping out the complex sets of relations between colonised and colonising subjects in colonial and post-colonial literature. This characteristic of McClintock’s work requires an understanding of colonial and post-colonial discourse theory that originates in the work of Edward Said in *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*.

Published in 1978, Said’s *Orientalism* is commonly regarded as the catalyst and reference point for post-colonial theory. To briefly summarise some of the themes and concerns of this volume, it explores the historically imbalanced relationship between the world of Islam, the Middle East, and the “Orient” on the one hand, and that of European and American imperialism on the other. Its focus on the researched field of nineteenth-century British and French imperialism is followed by a study of the latent imperialism that informs the relationship between Zionism and Palestine and that of the United States and the Islamic world in its sequels, *The Question of Palestine* and *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. This trilogy as a whole elaborates a unique understanding of imperialism and colonialism, an elaboration which culminates in *Culture and Imperialism*. What characterises Said’s understanding of imperialism and colonialism as unique is that, for him,

Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations which include notions that certain territories and people *require* and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with that domination (1993, 8).

In perceiving imperialism and colonialism as an epistemological and cultural attitude concomitant with the habit of dominating and, whenever possible, ruling distant territories, Said expands the tradition of post-colonial theory that sees imperialism and colonialism narrowly as violence against the colonised Other after Mahatma Gandhi and Frantz Fanon.¹¹ The emphasis on the reciprocal relationship between colonial knowledge and colonial power further relates the work of Said to that of Michel Foucault, whose notion of discourse sows the seeds of Said’s theory.

Foucault’s use of the term discourse as established ways of thinking together with the power structures that support them¹² not only provides a framework for post-colonial studies for the interaction between colonial knowledge and colonial power but also runs parallel with the

¹⁰ See Spivak, “Three women’s texts and a critique of imperialism” and “Can the subaltern speak?”

¹¹ See Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj: or Indian Home Rule* and *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vols. 1-90; Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, *Black Skin, White Masks*, and *A Dying Colonialism*.

¹² See Foucault, *L’archéologie du savoir* and *Surveiller et punir: naissance de la prison*.

theorist Jacques Derrida's critique of Western thought¹³ to form the basis of post-colonial theory of gender. At this point colonial and post-colonial discourse theory take on feminism, which leads us to the work of McClintock and Spivak. The importance of gender to the imperial, colonial and post-colonial project, for McClintock, is reflected in the interlocking concept of racial¹⁴ and sexual purity that is at work in the notion of degeneration. Designating the fear of miscegenation or racial interbreeding, the notion of degeneration that was of crucial importance for the Victorian concept of Britishness points to the construction of a sense of British racial identity as a civilising mission. As McClintock explains in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest*,

The degenerate classes, defined as departures from the normal human type, were as necessary to the self-definition of the middle class as the idea of degeneration was to the idea of progress, for the distance along the path of progress travelled by some portions of humanity could be measured only by the distance others lagged behind (1995, 46).

At issue in this notion of a British civilising mission is the position of the stereotype of the pure, maternal, white woman as a standard against which the mixed race woman is measured. Racial purity as such, in McClintock's words, "depends on the rigorous policing of women's sexuality", which, as an historical notion, "is implicated in the dynamics of gender" (1995, 61). The inseparability of race and gender, which constitutes a feminist approach to the violence of imperialism, colonialism and post-colonialism, links McClintock's work to Spivak's that analyses the impossibility of a subaltern subject speaking in its own voice. An exploration into this aspect of post-colonial feminist theory will find certain parallels between it and the search for identity in psychoanalysis that is associated with French feminist theory.

Calling on Western feminists to note that there must always be an implicit consideration of race in textual analyses of gender, post-colonial feminist theory questions the focus on gender alone in Western feminists' textual practices. The starting point of this project and its ultimate aim is to analyse the ideology of identity. In this regard, it is reminiscent of the French feminist theorist Kristeva's notion of abjection, which calls into question borders between separation, thus threatening identity, and identification in both individuals and nations or societies. Its relationship to French feminist theory unfolds here through the search for identity in psychoanalysis. This will be the framework for the study of Kristeva's representation of the abject in her novels in the third chapter of this thesis. Yet, in the first instance, where does

¹³ See Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, <<La mythologie blanche>>, and "Racism's Last Word".

¹⁴ Attention should be paid to the constructed nature of the term racial as well as to the misconception of the assumed biological origin of racial categories. See Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*; David Goldberg, *Racist Culture*; Paul Gilroy, "There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack": the Cultural Politics of Race and Nation; Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History*.

Kristeva develop her concept of the abject? The publication of *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: Essai sur l'abjection* in 1980 introduces readers to her conception of the abject as everything that the subject seeks to expunge in order to become social. In other words, a social being is constituted through the force of expulsion; the self has to expunge such elements as excrement, menstrual blood, urine, semen, tears, vomit, food, masturbation, incest, etc. that society deems impure in order to become social. The expelled elements, however, can never be fully obliterated but haunt the edges of the subject's identity with the threat of disruption or even dissolution. This process which Kristeva calls abjection has close parallels with McClintock's notion of civilising mission. More importantly, it is related to the post-colonial theorist and critic Homi Bhabha's study of mimicry and man in *The Location of Culture*, a book which to some extent reproduces the themes and concerns of Kristeva's work.

For Bhabha, colonial discourse or the "discourse of post-Enlightenment English colonialism" is "the discourse of mimicry [that] is constructed around *ambivalence*" (1994, 85, 86). For, according to him, "the epic intention of the civilizing mission, 'human and not wholly human' in the famous words of Lord Rosebery, 'writ by the finger of the Divine' often produces a text rich in the traditions of *trompe-l'œil*, irony, mimicry and repetition" (1994, 85). This text embodies "the desire [colonial writers have] for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (1994, 86). In other words, in order to represent themselves as "a reformed, recognizable Other", colonial writers have to undergo the process of being civilised, a process which is comparable to Kristeva's formulation of the construction of a social being. That process is described by Bhabha as "the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal" (1994, 86). Mimicry is thus "the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (1994, 86), says Bhabha. In this sense, the discourse of mimicry is a discourse that goes beyond the polarities of the Self and the Other, which is a figure for the Kristevan concept of the abject that is <<Ni sujet ni objet>> (1980, 9). This correlation between French feminist theory and post-colonial theory is tied to the narrative strategy of colonial discourse.

In relocating the Self in the "reformed, recognizable Other" (1994, 86), colonial discourse is a reflection of "the narrative and psychological force that nationness brings to bear on cultural production and political projection" (1994, 140), writes Bhabha. It thus becomes "an apparatus of symbolic power", which, according to Bhabha, "produces a continual slippage of categories, like sexuality, class affiliation, territorial paranoia, or 'cultural difference' in the act of writing the nation" (1994, 140). This displacement of terms is reminiscent of the Kristevan concept of the semiotic that is dependent on the symbolic in Kristeva's theorisation of a

signifying process, which relates Bhabha's analysis of nation and narration to Kristeva's psycholinguistic understanding of language. In fact, Bhabha's "DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of modern nation" in *The Location of Culture*, which we are discussing here, is partly a critique of Kristeva's <<Le temps des femmes>> that conveys the presence of the concept of a signifying process in the idea of a third generation of women.¹⁵ Through that relationship, which implies that Kristeva's essay has an influence on Bhabha's, the correlation between French feminist theory and post-colonial theory is linked with the concept of gender.

Here the concept of gender is associated with that of time, which constitutes Kristeva's discussion about the relationship between feminist history and the philosophy of time in <<Le temps des femmes>> in *Les nouvelles maladies de l'âme*. At issue in this association of time with gender is the idea of the future of feminism that consists of <<deux dimensions temporelles: le temps d'une histoire linéaire, *cursive*, et le temps d'une autre histoire, un autre temps donc, *monumental* (les termes sont de Nietzsche)>> (1993, 299). The former, as Kristeva explains, is inherent <<aux valeurs logiques et ontologiques d'une civilisation donnée a été largement démontré>> (1993, 304). In relation to that, the latter is <<traditionnellement liées à la subjectivité féminine pour autant qu'elle est pensée comme nécessairement maternelle>> (1993, 303). This distinction calls to mind her theorisation of the interaction between the symbolic that is associated with the Law of the Father and the semiotic that is associated with the maternal body in *La révolution du langage poétique*.¹⁶ A comparison thus can be made between the symbolic and linear time, out of which the concept of a "male" time is born,¹⁷ and the semiotic and monumental time, which points to monumental time as akin to "feminine" time. The gendering of time, in Kristeva's formulation of time, embodies the history of feminist movements; this poses a problem to the idea of French feminist theory as ahistorical and apolitical, despite the fact that the essay <<Le temps des femmes>> alone cannot represent the theoretical positions of the French feminist theorists.

In relating literature to life, <<Le temps des femmes>> has close parallels with the work of McClintock and Spivak, who attempt to destabilise the boundary between theory and practice in refining French feminist theory. The similarity between both analyses of the implications of

¹⁵ For a detailed discussion about this Kristevan concept of a third generation of women and of the other two phases of feminism in her formulation of feminist history and the philosophy of time, see "The Gendering of Time" in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

¹⁶ See Tina Chanter, "Female Temporality and the Future of Feminism", in *Abjection, Melancholia and Love: The Work of Julia Kristeva*, pp. 65-67. See also "Introduction: Julia Kristeva on Novel" in this thesis, pp. 5-6, for a brief account of Kristeva's distinction between the symbolic and the semiotic.

¹⁷ As Chanter has noted, this conception is perhaps misleading because "it is not the exclusive preserve of men", in *Abjection, Melancholia and Love: The Work of Julia Kristeva*, p. 65.

feminism involves also the question of nation. In <<Le temps des femmes>>, Kristeva's argument, as Bhabha has pointed out in *The Location of Culture*, has "its conjunctural, cultural history, not simply in psychoanalysis and semiotics, but in a powerful critique and redefinition of the nation as a space for the emergence of feminist political and psychic identifications" (1994, 153). In the work of McClintock and Spivak, the idea of the interlocking nature of representations of sexual and racial purity and that of the impossibility of a subaltern subject speaking in her own voice revolve around a critique of the processes whereby other nations are characterised as Other, as negatively different to an implied Western norm. Yet the definition of nation as a nation in the literal sense in the work of McClintock and Spivak is different from that of nation as <<valeurs nationales>> in Kristeva's <<Le temps des femmes>> (1993, 297). A discussion about the Kristevan concept of national values brings this chapter to a conclusion.

Drawing upon the Marxist account of the three factors that determine a nation: <<l'homogénéité économique, la tradition historique, l'unité linguistique>>, Kristeva suggests that <<valeurs nationales>> might exist in the nineteenth century as both <<rêve et réalité>> (1993, 297). After 1929 they became increasingly precarious, while <<la Seconde Guerre mondiale a mis fin à la réalité nationale pour n'en faire qu'une illusion maintenue désormais dans un but idéologique ou étroitement politique>> (1993, 297). Her redefinition of the nation, in which the nation does not exist as such, can be related to Bhabha's argument that empires and colonies emerge in the narrative ambivalence of disjunctive times and meanings. The concept of nation as narration, together with analyses of the ideology of identity, comprises the theme of part one in this thesis, "The Looking in the Mirror", which conveys the complex correlation between French feminist theory and post-colonial (feminist) theory. Through this theoretical framework the Kristevan notions of love, melancholia and abjection will be examined, not only in terms of how they constitute the focus of Kristeva's theoretical works in the 1980s, but also in terms of how Kristeva re-inscribes them in her fictional works in the 1990s. The following chapter begins with a discussion about Kristeva's fictional representation of narcissism that is implicated in love.

I

LOVE

- *Le Trou de la Vierge*.
Julia Kristeva, *Les Samouraïs*

In an argument with his mother about the virginal cult in Christianity, the writer Hervé Sinteuil, whose real name is Hervé de Montlaur, in Kristeva's novel, *Les Samouraïs*, explains why <<la Vierge est une invention géniale>> to his mother by referring to his book, <<*Le Trou de la Vierge*>> (LS 347, 346). The title of the book, however, is blasphemous in Mathilde de Montlaur's view, <<Parce que la Vierge ne peut pas avoir de trou>> (LS 346). This interchange between Hervé and Mathilde de Montlaur brings up the question of narcissism that I raised in the previous chapter and shall pursue in this chapter.

As revealed in Mathilde's opinion on the subject of the Virgin Mary, there is masculine sublimation at work in the cultural construction of the Maternal. Impregnation without sexuality is a fantasy masking primary narcissism, which Hervé's response to Mathilde's criticism of his work captures and counters:

Puisqu'elle n'a pas de trou, précisément, sinon l'oreille pour laisser passer le Saint-Esprit, la Vierge est toute entière un vide axial. Je te prie de faire un effort pour imaginer la géométrie que je propose. Autour de ce vide axial s'articule l'entente du Père, du Fils et du Saint-Esprit. La Vierge est en somme une absence de corps, un trou, mais qui est aussi support. Et, étant précisément ce corps-trou, elle est destinée à libérer l'humanité de son obsession érotique. A moins qu'elle ne suscite au contraire, à la place de ce corps-trou, un débordement d'imagination pour combler le vide (LS 346-347).

The Virgin as a medium for the Father to reproduce himself embodies men's imagination of how they were brought into being. At the same time, the sexual connotations the concept of the hole of the Virgin carries, call into question the belief in the Immaculate Conception. If the Son is produced through "original sin", the hole of the Virgin precedes the psychoanalytic theory of the Dark Continent that embodies men's fear of their own forbidden sexual desires. It is thus redolent of colonial landscapes, which were described by Victorian writers as virgin territories eager for penetration, thereby reflecting male sexuality.¹

Given its relation to psychoanalytic theory and colonial discourse, Hervé's idea of the hole of the Virgin covers the issues I aim to explore in discussing the theme of narcissism in Kristeva's novels: the implications of Kristeva's portrayal of the narcissistic characters, of her

¹ See, for instance, Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Class and Sex under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics: 1793-1905*; Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience*; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest*.

reading of the Freudian theory of love, and of her theorisation of love. This link between the novelist Kristeva's delineation of narcissism and her character Hervé's theory of the virginal cult in Christianity will serve as the basis of my attempt to read Kristeva's theory of love in the context of the relationship between French feminist theory and post-colonial (feminist) theory in this chapter. To see how that link is established, it is necessary to outline the Narcissus myth in which the concept of narcissism originates.

The Narcissus Myth

Narcissus, who made his first appearance in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, was the son of the river-god Cephissus and the nymph Liriope.² When he was born, the seer Tiresias was asked to foretell if he would live to a ripe old age, a question to which the soothsayer replied: "if he never knows himself". The prophecy, as the story unfolds, came true in this way.

Exceptionally handsome, Narcissus attracted youngsters of both sexes alike. Yet he was unaware of all this and lived in his own world, spending his time hunting and caring for no one but himself. His friend, Ameinias, who was in love with him, committed suicide in despair; competitors of Ameinias's were disheartened and cried for vengeance. The excessive indifference of Narcissus in turn led Nemesis, goddess of divine retribution, to the decision that she would avenge the victims of this attractive man. Her plan was carried out on a very warm day, when Narcissus was so worn out and thirsty that he leaned over a spring to drink from it. He saw his reflection in the water and fell madly in love with what he saw. As he went closer to the object of his love, he lost his balance and drowned. From his body was born the flower that bears his name and is the symbol of self-love.³

The concept of the love of self, or of narcissism, originating in the work of Ovid, as Kristeva notes in her study of the history of the Narcissus myth in *Histoires d'amour*, becomes <<le topos fondamental d'une pensée qui se détache de la philosophie antique pour nourrir la spéculation>> (1983, 134). This is reflected in <<Le corpus hermétique, ainsi que les gnostiques>>, which viewed <<le monde sensible>> as <<le résultat d'une faute>> (1983, 134). This view of <<le monde sensible>> is indicative of the fact that the fable of Narcissus entered the domain of literature at the beginning of the Christian era. In the third century, Plotinus (A.D. 205-270), however, challenged this view of <<le monde sensible>> as <<le résultat d'une faute>> inspired by the Narcissus myth; for him, <<le reflet originaire créateur du cosmos est un

² For a review of how Ovid and storytellers after him, such as Andromeda, Boccaccio, André Gide, etc., tell the story of Narcissus and Echo, see, for instance, Michael Grant, *Myths of the Greeks and Romans*, pp. 381-385. Here I shall focus on the Narcissus myth.

³ See chapter III in Ovid's *The Metamorphoses*, pp. 339-510.

processus nécessaire, et c'est seulement le *reflet de ce reflet* dans des substances périssables, qui nous éloigne de l'idéal et lui vaut en conséquence d'être condamné>> (1983, 135), remarks Kristeva.

The Plotinian theory of the perceptible world as a mirror of <<le *reflet originaire*>> creates a parallel between the story of Narcissus and the tale of the Virgin Mary, since the figure of the Virgin Mary is only an earthly vehicle for reproducing God's reflection. It therefore introduces, in an implicit manner, the question of narcissism in the context of the cultural construction of the Maternal, which I shall examine in respect of Kristeva's novels in this chapter. This aspect of Kristeva's novels, however, cannot be unravelled without studying the narcissistic element of the novels. Where then is this narcissistic element in the novels? As I propounded in the previous chapter, one of the answers to the question lies in Kristeva's representation of the characters Olga Morena and Stéphanie Delacour, a representation which is implicated in the work of the feminist post-colonial theorist and critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

Kristeva's Novelistic Characters as a Reincarnation of Narcissus

The discussion about the way in which Kristeva's heroines reproduce Narcissus's character in this section starts with a brief introduction to the auto-biographer and one of the two narrators in *Les Samouraïs*, Olga Morena. I had mentioned in the previous chapter that the latter is the embodiment of the concept of privileged informants relating to Spivak's reading of Kristeva's representation of the silent Chinese women in *Des Chinoises*. What likens her to Kristeva is the way she recounts her intellectual adventure, which moves from Paris to China to New York and back to Paris. It is in her description of her travelling in China that a comparison between Olga and the mythical figure Narcissus can be made with relation to post-colonial feminist theory.

The question of nation is thus, in line with our hypothesis, the theme of our exploration into the complexities of the narcissistic element of Kristeva's *Les Samouraïs*. For why is it in the context of Olga's representation of China that the novelist Kristeva casts her in the role of the mythical figure Narcissus? A reading of part III, <<CHINOIS>>, in *Les Samouraïs* points to the concept of difference. As Olga asks at the beginning of her reflections on her experience of travelling in China, <<Avaient-ils le sentiment (fût-ce un sentiment vague, inconscient, inconsciemment coupable et donc rejetable) de se précipiter vers la Chine pour échapper à une impasse personnelle?>> (LS 195) Projecting her question about why she was in China onto her companions, the Parisian intellectuals to which the <<ils>> refer, Olga conveys her impression of Paris as lacking life compared with China. The idea that exploring China can restore the Parisian intellectuals' passion for life then constitutes her perceptions of what China is throughout her

journey there. Ironically, that idea only embodies her, as well as the French's, ideology of the country China and its people. As is clear in her meditations on the object of her investigation,

D'ailleurs, quoi de plus <chinois> – bizarre, aberrant, lunatique – que la Chine? S'arracher à soi-même à travers les Chinois. Casser le masque de la conformité. Plonger non pas jusqu'aux racines (quoique, nous l'avons dit, une descente vers l'héritage ne soit pas dépourvue d'intérêt), mais au-delà, dans le déracinement total (LS 196).

Having the power to do away with origins, roots, China allows the travellers to adopt what Olga terms <<une contre-identité>> that reveals and conceals the travellers simultaneously (LS 196). By finding <<une contre-identité>> for themselves, the travellers are constantly reborn while the country they are in becomes a mother, who is <<éternelle et inconnaissable>> (LS 197).

Admittedly, difference is that which informs the concept of <<une contre-identité>> that, for Olga, represents the power of China (LS 196). Underlying the correlation between the questioning of what differentiates China from Paris and the concept of <<une contre-identité>> is a Western philosophy of the Orient, which views the Orient as mystical.⁴ The equation of China with the archaic mother in Olga's understanding of the meaning of <<chinois>> exemplifies the above mentality. This stereotyped European definition of the Orient calls for an examination; and the work of Edward Said, the first post-colonial theorist and critic to consider Orientalism as a form of colonial discourse, is apposite here for the attention it gives to the theory of a "European invention" of the Orient. In *Orientalism*, his first book on colonialism and its relation to the Orient, for instance, Said suggests that the Occident invents the Orient through encountering the Oriental woman. One of these encounters, according to him, takes place in a scene from Gustave Flaubert's *Flaubert in Egypt: A Sensibility on Tour*.⁵

Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptian courtesan produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman; she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. He spoke for and represented her [...]. It fairly stands for the pattern of the relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient it enabled (1978, 6).

Despite the problem of being too simplistic in his reading of the production of the Oriental woman, as the "European invention" of the Orient cannot simply stand for the relation between East and West, Said draws attention to the narcissism of Western writers on the Orient.

⁴ See Said's discussion about "the nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of 'the mysterious Orient'" in *Orientalism*, p. 26.

⁵ The English translation of this book Said uses here is Francis Steegmuller's. See his *Orientalism*, pp. 186-188, for a detailed account of the relationship between Kuchuk Hanem, the "famous [...] dancer and courtesan" from Wadi Halfa in Egypt, and Flaubert. In those pages, he discusses the idea of Hanem as "an occasion and an opportunity for Flaubert's musings" that lead to "the versions of carnal female temptation" and the conception of the Oriental woman as "a disturbing symbol of fecundity" but "doomed to remain barren, corrupting, without issue" in the work of Flaubert.

Following his model of Orientalism, which treats the production of the Orient by the West as the Other of the West, one can see similarities between the Oriental woman in Flaubert's *Flaubert in Egypt* and China, the mother, in Kristeva's *Les Samouraïs*. Both are spoken for, thereby leaving the "reality" of their countries unknown. If we do not focus on both novels' fidelity to the truth about the Orient, we can compare the novelist Flaubert and the fictional character Olga Morena to the mythical figure Narcissus, who lived in illusion. In terms of Kristeva's novelistic characters as a reincarnation of Narcissus, an analogy can also be drawn between Olga Morena and the newspaper reporter and amateur detective Stéphanie Delacour in Kristeva's two other novels, *Le vieil homme et les loups* and *Possessions*. Like Olga, who speaks for and represents the Chinese in *Les Samouraïs*, Stéphanie portrays Eastern barbarians from the perspective of a Westerner in the aforesaid novels.

In *Le vieil homme et les loups*, Eastern barbarians are represented by Stéphanie as the wolves that inhabit the seaside resort Santa Barbara: <<Aucun doute: les hordes sauvages [i.e. les loups] étaient là, dissimulées mais présentes. Elles s'emparaient des villages et des villes, elles s'infiltraient sous la peau des gens, le monde entier devenait de plus en plus canin, féroce et barbare>> (VH 10). The association of the East with barbarism, animalism that points to the Western ideology of the East as uncivilised is reflected in the gruesome discovery of the decapitated body of gifted translator Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*. Stéphanie meditates on the relationship between the murder of Gloria and that of John the Baptist in the Bible,

Jean-Baptiste fut un saint, et un homme, et il annonça notre ère avant Jésus, puisqu'il le baptisa dans l'eau pure du Jourdain. Autant de raisons pour comprendre, sans nullement la justifier, la jouissance d'Hérodiade, et des autres. Mais Gloria? Une femme. <Pauvre femme> non, puisqu'il y a eu sa fortune, ou plutôt celle de sa famille. Mais simple femme tout de même, traductrice à Santa Barbara. Il faut le faire, car pourquoi traduire quand personne n'écrit plus aujourd'hui (sinon les ordinateurs) ni ne lit (sauf les femmes seules à la plage, ce qui ne fait pas vraiment un gros public)? (P 18)

Different from John the Baptist, who was a saint and a man, Gloria is nevertheless a victim of inhumanity. The presupposition that her death has to do with the fact that she is a wealthy foreigner in communist Eastern Europe replicates the stereotyped image of communist regimes in Western European history (P 18, 22-24). In implying that Eastern Europe is monstrous in relation to its counterpart, Stéphanie reinvents Western European imperialism. While the "reality" of communist regimes might correspond to Stéphanie's interpretation of Communist countries, the object of investigation in Stéphanie's representation of East and West, that is, Eastern barbarians, has not made its voice heard.

The problem Stéphanie's approach to Eastern Europe poses brings us back to Olga's self-centred delineation of China which runs parallel with the post-colonial theorist and critic Edward

Said's model of Orientalism. In this sense, the representation of the East in Kristeva's novels can be seen as a fictionalisation of the depiction of Chinese women in the theorist Kristeva's book, *Des Chinoises*. As I had discussed in the previous chapter, the object of research, Chinese women, in *Des Chinoises* is spoken for and represented by the liberal-feminist investigator, Kristeva. This makes the book a product of the narcissism of the privileged informant; it is, in Spivak's words, a book "about [Kristeva's] *own* identity".⁶ In bringing together the question of narcissism and that of identity, Spivak's criticism of the book leads into the subject of narcissistic identity that I shall approach with the work of Kristeva. This exploration into Kristeva's understanding of narcissistic identity will make us see the problematics of Spivak's and Said's analysis of the relationship between the Self and the Other.

In psychoanalytic terms, narcissistic identity, according to Kristeva, involves the notion of emptiness that is at the root of the human psyche. As she puts it in her discussion about Freudian notions of narcissism in *Histoires d'amour*,

[...] le narcissisme, pris dans le jeu de ses ricochets à l'intérieur du texte freudien, cède dans un premier temps devant l'impression d'un jeu mimétique constitutif des identités psychiques (Moi/objet), avant que ce jeu ne se dévoile, à la longue et dans le vertige des renvois, comme un écran sur le *vide* (1983, 34).

Her reading of narcissism as a screen for emptiness problematises Spivak's, as well as Said's, romantic idealisation of the Other. In other words, the work of Spivak and Said, which exposes the narcissism of privileged informants, is itself a narcissistic attack on the other because of its "simplistic politics [that] regards the reduction of the 'other' to the 'same' as the root of all political evil" (1996, 205), to quote the literary critic Terry Eagleton. As Eagleton explains in *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, the way in which (feminist) post-colonial theorists analyse the work of Western writers on the Third World has made the distinction between otherness and self-identity "[threaten] to become drearily self-identical" (1996, 205). By identifying themselves with the Other in their perceptions of that term, (feminist) post-colonial theorists idealise themselves as the Other. They thus can be compared with Western writers on the Third World in their discussion about the way privileged informants represent the Other, who is in fact a medium for privileged informants to reintroduce the Western Self. The narcissism of both (feminist) post-colonial theorists and Western writers on the Third World presents a different idea of identity from that in Kristeva's psychoanalytic study of narcissism, which has a more complex structure.

At issue in the Kristevan concept of narcissistic identity is the notion of emptiness. The implications of that notion, in Kristeva's reading of Freud's theory of narcissism, are inseparable

⁶ Spivak, "French Feminism in an International Frame", *Yale French Studies* 62 (1981), p. 158.

from Freud's journey through the land of love and the hypothesis of Narcissus is crucial to the Freudian journey. As Kristeva suggests at the beginning of her essay <<Freud et l'amour: le malaise dans la cure>> in *Histoires d'amour*, <<Freud arrive chez Narcisse après avoir traversé l'espace dissocié de l'hystérie>> in his journey through the land of love (1983, 31). The findings, writes Kristeva, lead Freud to establish <<l'«espace psychique» qu'il fera éclater, par Narcisse d'abord, et, pour finir, par la pulsion de mort, en espaces impossibles, ceux de l'«hainamoration», c'est-à-dire du transfert infini>> (1983, 31).⁷ By transference, Kristeva means Freud's definition of love in analysis, which is a displacement of meaning and intensity (i.e. *Verschiebung*) in *L'Interprétation des rêves* (1900) and then a displacement of love towards the person of the analyst (i.e. *Übertragung*) in <<La dynamique de transfert>> (1912), <<Remarques sur l'amour de transfert>> (1915), <<La construction en analyse>> (1937) and <<Analyse terminée et interminable>> (1937) (1983, 23). Transference love, in Kristeva's words, <<intervient sur le divan pour permettre au scalpel de la parole assumée par un sujet, de délimiter le royaume de ses possibles>> (1983, 19). It is thus a dynamic involving <<le *sujet* (l'analysant), son *objet* d'amour imaginaire ou réel [...] et le *Tiers*, le tenant-lieu d'Idéal potentiel, de Pouvoir possible>> (1987, 23). Briefly, the relationship between these three elements is that the analyst is a subject with whom the analysand identifies, since he or she is supposed to know and knows how to love. At the same time, his or her ability to put himself or herself in the analysand's place, looking, dreaming, and suffering as if he or she were the subject, constitutes countertransference love. The interaction between transference love and countertransference love, which changes the essence of identity and its relation to narcissism, is made possible by a relation to an object outside the analyst/analysand relationship, and which Kristeva calls the real object of love.

The Freudian theory of love, in Kristeva's reading, as reciprocal identification and detachment (transference and countertransference), although imaginary, is a milestone in the history of the Narcissus myth; narcissism is not only about idealisation but also about an infinite quest for rebirths (l'«espace psychique») through the experience of love.⁸ In other words, the ideal object has to be sought, or desired, with passion rather than staying pure and out of reach. Passion here refers to passion *in* language, which is reflected in metaphor. For Kristeva, metaphor is more than a linguistic phenomenon; it is the point at which ideal and affect come together in language. Through the agency of metaphor, love is present in poetry and art in

⁷ See my discussion about the concept of <<*Le Trou de la Vierge*>> in this chapter for an illustration of this point. See also my discussion about the theme of violence in Kristeva's novels in the fifth chapter and of evil in Kristeva's novels in the sixth chapter of this thesis.

⁸ See my discussion about the implications of "A Virgin Mother as the Imaginary Father" in this chapter for an illustration of this point.

general.⁹ This link between love and metaphor finds its expression in the theme of possession in Kristeva's fictional works; and the novelistic characters as a reincarnation of Narcissus in this case are the anthropologist Martin Cazenave, who later becomes a painter in *Les Samourais*, the army surgeon Vespasien in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, and the speech therapist Pauline Gadeau in *Possessions*. What possesses these protagonists is a sense of hatred that comes from a lack of psychic life,¹⁰ because the real objects of love they seek contribute to their downfall. In *Les Samourais*, the feminist Carole Benedetti, who is Martin Cazenave's mistress, occupies the place of the real object of love. In *Le vieil homme et les loups*, it is the body of a drowned woman, who is the double of Vespasien's wife, Alba Ram. Meanwhile, in *Possessions*, it is the half-deaf child Jerry Novak, who reminds Pauline Gadeau of her dead brother. These real objects of love embody the subjects' passion for life, which the narrators (analysts) in the novels feel and sympathise with.

Speaking through the narrator Olga Morena in *Les Samourais*, Kristeva tells readers how desperate Martin Cazenave is to have a child with his mistress Carole Benedetti: <<- Écoute, j'en veux un [enfant]. Rien qu'avec toi. Tu verras, ce sera une nouvelle vie>> (LS 122). Hence, when Carole turns him down, the pain she inflicts on him deadens his passion for life. Unloved, he becomes unreasonable, and Carole feels responsible for this: <<J'aurais dû accepter cet enfant, il aurait peut-être apaisé Martin>> (LS 278). This interpretation of Martin's madness points to love as the reasoning behind his self-destructive behaviour, including drinking and having dangerous sex with female and male lovers (LS 272, 135, 278). The representation of his melancholia and depression is his painting,¹¹ in which he chases his real object of love:

Carole le regardait projeter du vert, du rouge, du jaune sur la toile posée à même le sol. Esquisser avec le pinceau, dans ces nuages de couleur, des yeux en colère, des bouches crispées, ou peut-être simplement des ronds, des cailloux, des pavés. Il se caressait? Giflait quelqu'un, le lacérait, le massacrait? Ou ensemencerait-il la toile, faute de féconder une femme? (LS 139)¹²

Through Carole's eyes, Olga Morena sees Martin's love as being for an/other and himself, since <<Il se caressait>> implies masturbation. The narcissism of the painter Martin here implies the origins of Western Eros, that is, homosexual love. As the relationship between narcissism and male sexuality continues to be the focus of Kristeva's portrayal, in terms of love, of the army surgeon Vespasien in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, it is important to summarise Kristeva's

⁹ See Kristeva's analysis of the theme of perfume as love in Baudelaire's poetry in *Histoires d'amour*, pp. 394-422. See also John Lechte's reading of Kristeva's writings on art and love in *Abjection, Melancholia and Love: the Work of Julia Kristeva*, pp. 29-33.

¹⁰ I shall return to this point later in this section.

¹¹ See my discussion about the theme of melancholia in Kristeva's novels in the next chapter.

¹² See my discussion about Kristeva's notion of a <<faux-self>> in the sixth chapter of this thesis.

discussion about love and male sexuality in *Histoires d'amour* before concluding her delineation of it in *Les Samouraïs* with the encounter between Martin and Olga in Luxembourg.

The notion of love, according to Kristeva, is where <<Psyché>> speaks and displays herself from the first moment it comes into existence (1983, 77). Its involvement in male homosexuality dates from the work of Plato. As Kristeva suggests,

On relira Platon encore une fois, dans *Le Banquet* (385 avant notre ère) et le *Phèdre* (366), pour saisir, au chavirement du discours mythique en discours philosophique, la première apologie affirmée de l'Eros occidental sous les traits de l'amour homosexuel (1983, 77).

This appetite for homologation applies to the female in a more complicated way, yet both male and female homosexuality present a love centred in the self, who is a reflection of the unapproachable Other. By the unapproachable Other, Kristeva means the real object of love whom the subject loves and who causes the subject to be. In such a conception of love, it is, however, the Plotinian soul, rather than the Platonic soul, that bears a narcissistic mirror.¹³ This love thus conflates homosexual love with the Narcissus myth, since it is the Narcissus myth that sustains the Plotinian theory of the perceptible world. The idea that homosexual love is a type of narcissism is the theory Kristeva employs as her representation of love and male sexuality in her fictional works.

In *Les Samouraïs*, male homosexuality, as discussed above, is symbolised by the imaginary masturbation that Martin's painting captures. It becomes very apparent when Martin, in Carole's view, is <<très lié aux amis de Scherner>>, who are a special kind of friend: <<culte du corps, très hard, pantalons et vestes cuir, chaînes, bondages, S.M. et le reste>> (LS 278). The fact that Scherner (i.e. Michel Foucault) died of AIDS supports the image of Martin's self-destructive behaviour in terms of male sexuality (LS 436). As Carole speaks through the narrator Olga Morena, <<[Martin est un] fantôme. Translucide. D'un courage! Mourant>> (LS 437). Yet Martin's ego denies Carole's remarks and feels hostile towards Olga when he is reunited with her, in a rendezvous with Carole in Luxembourg, years after they were schoolfellows. Olga, on the other hand, is sympathetic to Martin's psychic disorders: <<Elle ne voulait pas le contredire. Lui parler de quoi? De sa peinture, de ses projets, des ses plaisirs, de San Francisco? Une vie sans détente, jusqu'à la mort>> (LS 438). Love springs from this encounter between Martin and Olga, since Olga has been listening to Carole's story of her life with Martin, and Carole is Martin's unapproachable Other: <<- Je ne t'ai pas perdu de vue, grâce à Carole. (Olga.) - Je suis aussi un homme constant, à ma façon [...]. (Martin)>> (LS 439).

¹³ See Kristeva's discussion about love and male sexuality in *Histoires d'amour*, pp. 77-105.

The role of the real object of love as a reflection of the subject's sexuality appears in *Le vieil homme et les loups* in a similar way, played by the body of a drowned woman. As mentioned earlier, the body of a drowned woman in *Le vieil homme et les loups* is the double of Alba Ram, the wife of the army surgeon Vespasien (VH 90). The way in which it is a reflection of Vespasien's sexuality begins with the violent love story of Vespasien and Alba.¹⁴ After marrying Alba, Vespasien gradually loses his interest in her and determines to inflict suffering on her. His destructive tendency, in the narrator Stéphanie Delacour's view, is, however, inseparable from Alba's attitude towards him: <<On peut comprendre que la gravité d'Alba avait de quoi assommer n'importe quel homme, et davantage encore Vespasien>> (VH 82). The scene of the crime where the body of a drowned woman closely resembling Alba is found thus expresses the fight to the death between the couple, a situation which blocks their psychic life. Through the body of the drowned woman, Stéphanie sees the possibility of Vespasien's being a criminal:

Il y avait une bouteille de bourbon dans ma valise à l'hôtel. J'ai passé la nuit avec elle et avec l'idée qu'il me fallait retrouver Vespasien. Le faire parler. Voire coucher avec lui pour le faire parler. Le faire boire. Il sera excité mais impuissant, une brute molle, pas même besoin de prendre des préservatifs, il me dira tout entre deux draps. Les types virils, j'en sais quelque chose (VH 94).

This interpretation of Vespasien's murderous intentions links Vespasien's murderous tendency with his incapacity to love himself. That inability is reflected in Vespasien's obsession with wealth, power and position, all of which are a replacement for his real object of love; and he himself is his unapproachable Other. As Stéphanie tells us, he desires to exercise <<[un] pouvoir sans partage>> at home and at work and to project <<une image>> of authority (VH 46, 61).

The sympathy Stéphanie feels for Vespasien places countertransference love in the context of male sexuality that manifests itself in the war between Vespasien and Alba. As Stéphanie points out in her analysis of Vespasien's marriage to Alba, hatred has hindered Vespasien's passion for Alba:

Après tout, Vespasien aurait très bien pu la laisser tomber? – Erreur! L'opinion est stupide mais pointilleuse. On aurait risqué de le trouver sordide. De plus, l'<Empereur> avait besoin à ses côtés de quelqu'un d'à peu près convenable: il la recueille, elle lui doit tout, il lui destine ses colères, elle accepte, sage, ça ne manque pas de confort, c'est même érotique parfois. Plus rare depuis que Vespasien garde son excitation pour lui; il se masturbe, ou va chez des femmes émancipées qui aiment le plaisir et ne lui demandent rien. Les gens comme Alba croient que ces jeux n'existent pas. Mais si! Du moins Vespasien en est-il sûr (VH 81).

¹⁴ See my discussion about the discourse of "The War Between the Sexes" in Kristeva's novels in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

Here male (homo)sexuality is implicated in the desire for the real object of love. Sexually frustrated, Vespasien turns to masturbation and visiting <<des femmes émancipées>> to compensate a narcissism that, as discussed above, leads to his (self-)destructive behaviour (VH 81, 94). At this point the relationship between love and male (homo)sexuality in *Le vieil homme et les loups* reiterates the way it has been portrayed in *Les Samourais*: just as Martin surrenders to dangerous cult of the body as a consequence of lack of love in *Les Samourais*, so Vespasien indulges in unhealthy sexual pleasure as a solution to his deadened passion in *Le vieil homme et les loups*. Illness of the soul, as we have seen, drains Martin; yet, conversely, it drives Vespasien to violence. In addition to venting his wrath on Alba, Vespasien is, as represented by Stéphanie, suspected of the murder of the drowned woman, who is the double of Alba (VH 91). The body of the drowned woman, as symbolic of Vespasien's murderous tendency associated with his (homo)sexuality, thus acts as Vespasien's real object of love, for it is a reflection of what Vespasien desires.

The function of the corpse as the subject's real object of love continues to shape Kristeva's representation of the theme of possession in *Possessions*. Hatred that possesses Vespasien and turns him into a narcissist in *Le vieil homme et les loups* has a comparable effect on the speech therapist Pauline Gadeau in *Possessions*. Possessed by the idea that the heroine Gloria Harrison in *Possessions* is not fit to be a mother, Pauline murders Gloria, whose decapitated body embodies the subject's search for love (P 267).¹⁵ The real object of love in this journey is Gloria's son Jerry Novak, who is the double of Pauline's dead brother Aimeric Gadeau (P 268). Unable to forget the pain the loss of her brother in her adolescence caused her, Pauline gives full rein to her suffering and commits the crime when she finds Gloria destroying her real object of love, Jerry. As she expresses through the narrator Stéphanie Delacour in the novel what she makes of Gloria's neglect of Jerry, it takes her back to twenty years ago, to the time when she was not given a chance to save her brother's life, which affirms her judgement of what Gloria deserves (P 266):

[Gloria est une] femme impuissante, déprimée, c'est ça, une mère, voilà le mystère. Comme moi. Je hais. La haine ne fait pas qu'imploser, blanc brasier qui me consume depuis vingt ans déjà, pleurs, insomnies, envies niées, jalousies repassées, colères muées en soins. La haine tranche. Le scalpel déplie les chairs, les vertèbres s'ouvrent sous sa précision, les os cèdent: j'incise (P 267).

Given that obsessional love is the backdrop for the crime, Pauline's (self-)destructive tendency is an acting-out of a breakdown that results from her unfulfilled desire for motherhood in the past.

¹⁵ Compare this point with my discussion about "The Sacrificial Body" in Kristeva's novels in the sixth chapter of this thesis.

The fact that she lives in the emotional trauma she has suffered since her brother's accidental death makes her belief that she owns Jerry understandable. For, as Jerry's speech therapist, she <<lui a donné la parole, autant dire une âme>> (P 261). At the same time, that belief is sheer self-deception, which points to her as a reincarnation of Narcissus. Deceiving herself with the idea that Jerry is not a half-deaf patient but a reflection of her own being, she problematises her own desire for the real object of love. If the real object of love which she desires is her creation, it is she herself who is her unapproachable Other.

The narcissism of Pauline, which ends in murder, is nevertheless born out of love. As is clear in Stéphanie Delacour's description of the relationship between Pauline and Jerry, there are <<Deux bouches, deux gorges, deux paires de pupilles, et seulement deux oreilles pour [Pauline et Jerry]. Un travail de fourmis? La parole n'est pas innée, la parole naît d'un amour qui écoute>> (P 262). Thus, although Stéphanie cannot condone the crime Pauline commits (P 275), she sympathises with the plight of Pauline and her investigation of the murder of Gloria concludes with her being possessed by Pauline's demon:

L'évidence de la rue du Cherche-Midi allait bientôt la reprendre, mais Stéphanie savait qu'elles y vivraient désormais à deux: la journaliste-détective, et une virtuelle caresse pour cette lésion dans la voix de Jerry. Le démon de Pauline possédait déjà Mlle Delacour: c'est sous cet aspect indifférent, mais secrètement pathétique, qu'il s'apprêtait à descendre dans le paysage logique de Paris (P 278).

The idea that <<Le démon de Pauline>> inhabits Stéphanie associates Stéphanie, a Westerner, with the image of a barbarian. This association relates the novel to Said's model of Orientalism in that it brings out the boundary between the Self and the Other theorised by Said but blurs it at the same time. The barbarism of a Westerner in turn brings us back to the story of Vespasien, whose violence points to him, a Westerner, as a barbarian in *Le vieil homme et les loups*. He, as well as Stéphanie, can be compared with privileged informants in the work of Said and Spivak, since privileged informants are guilty of reintroducing themselves in their representation of the Other. In other words, they, as Westerners who consider themselves to be civilised, are barbarous in Said's and Spivak's point of view.

Unlike privileged informants in the work of Said and Spivak, the fictional character Stéphanie, however, recognises the devil that resides in her, a recognition from which countertransference love emerges. The emergence of this countertransference love is implicated in the subject or the analysand Pauline's desire for motherhood, a desire which turns her into a demon. <<Le démon de Pauline>> as <<une virtuelle caresse pour cette lésion dans la voix de Jerry>> in turn refers us to the Freudian theory of love. That love, as represented by Kristeva in *Histoires d'amour*, is inseparable from hate (1987, 21). By taking us back to the discussion about

Kristeva's reading of the Freudian theory of love, <<Le démon de Pauline>> leads into the subject of the relationship between the concept of the impossible spaces <<de l'<hainamoration>>> (1983, 31) and the desire for motherhood, which shall serve as a prelude to the analysis of the concept of <<Le Trou de la Vierge>> in the following section.

<<Le Trou de la Vierge>>

The implications of <<Le démon de Pauline>> find their expression in the image of the Virgin Mother, who, as explained in the introduction to this chapter, epitomises motherhood as a product of narcissism. Regarding herself as Jerry's mother, Pauline gives birth to Jerry through speech or Word, a role that can be compared with that of the Father in the Catholic model of conception. The difference between the reality of Pauline as a reincarnation of the Virgin and the cult of the Virgin in Catholic doctrine¹⁶ is that Pauline is not an object of desire and narcissism but a narcissist herself. In this respect Kristeva's discussion of the figure of <<UNE VIERGE MÈRE>> as illustrative of feminine depression in *Soleil noir, dépression et mélancolie* deserves attention (1987, 99).

The figure of A Virgin Mother is used by Kristeva to explain the mental state of her patient Isabelle in her exploration into feminine depression in *Soleil noir* (1987, 99). The way in which Isabelle is a Virgin Mother in this case is that <<elle voulait avoir son enfant <pour elle-même>. Peu lui importait de savoir de qui était cet enfant>> (1987, 100). This is because she was <<Déçue par son mari, méfiante de ce qui lui semblait être l'<inconsistance infantile> de son amant>> (1987, 100). In order to convince herself of her existence, Isabelle, as Kristeva goes on to suggest, had to have a child who would be <<un <compagnon sûr>: <Quelqu'un qui aurait besoin de moi, avec lequel on serait complice, on ne se quitterait jamais, enfin, presque ...>> (1987, 100). The meaning of becoming a Virgin Mother then involves, for Isabelle, a sense of re-creating herself, a self which would be the real object of love in Kristeva's reading of the Freudian concept of transference love or love in analysis in *Histoires d'amour* (1987, 10). The real object of love which the Virgin Mother Isabelle desires as a reflection of the subject's own being brings us back to the half-deaf child Jerry Novak in Kristeva's novel *Possessions*.

As Pauline Gadeau's real object of love, Jerry, as discussed in the previous section, is also a reflection of Pauline's own being in *Possessions*. He, in Pauline's perceptions, is a reliable companion who needs her. Unofficially abandoned by his biological mother Gloria Harrison, Jerry, as Pauline indicates through the narrator Stéphanie Delacour's reconstruction of the murder of Gloria, <<n'a que Pauline pour le défendre. Elle est prête. Il peut compter sur elle>> (P 266).

¹⁶ I shall return to this point later in this section.

The closeness Pauline feels in her relationship with Jerry brings forth the image of a Virgin Mother that Kristeva theorises in *Soleil noir*, since it expresses close similarity to the bond between the Virgin Mother Isabelle and her child. Despite the boundary between fiction and reality, a comparison can also be made with respect to the cause of Pauline's desire for motherhood and that of Isabelle's; both involve hatred of irresponsibility. Upset about Gloria's neglect of Jerry, Pauline is determined to mother Jerry, who becomes Pauline's reliable companion (P 273-275). Likewise, despondent over her husband's betrayal, Isabelle desires to be a mother and has her child for herself (1987, 100).

The role of hatred in Pauline and Isabelle's motivation for becoming a mother ushers in the question of Pauline and Isabelle's condition: what emotional state does hatred put Pauline and Isabelle in? That question cannot be answered without referring to Kristeva's concept of <<trou noir>> in *Soleil noir* (1987, 99). By black hole, Kristeva means nothingness as an absolute, a theory which she develops from analysing her patient Isabelle's <<identité dépressive>> (1987, 99). The deciding factor that contributes to Isabelle's depressive identity is the relationship between Isabelle and her lovers, who have come into conflict with Isabelle, deserted her, or separated from her (1987, 99). This does not mean that Isabelle is affected by what her lovers have done to her in the sense of feeling grief; on the contrary she experiences no grief. It is nothingness around which Isabelle's depressive identity is organised, for her superego dignity has transformed grief into what Kristeva terms <<une hypertrophie inabordable>> (1987, 99). As Kristeva explains in her retrospective assessment of the session in which she analysed Isabelle's melancholy mood,

La douleur, humiliante à force d'être tenue secrète, innommable et indicible, s'était muée en *silence psychique* qui ne refoulait pas la blessure, mais en tenait lieu et, plus encore, la condensant, lui rendait une intensité exorbitante, imperceptible aux sensations et aux représentations (1987, 99).

Such a black hole that is <<le mal-être sensoriel, sexuel, fantasmatique des abandons et des déceptions>> is Isabelle's home, out of which her activities, including her living motherhood, are built (1987, 100).

In a similar vein, in *Possessions*, hatred towards the heroine Gloria Harrison refreshes Pauline's memory of the black hole of her melancholia her brother's accidental death leaves her: <<Je hais. La haine ne fait pas qu'imploser, blanc brasier qui me consume depuis vingt ans déjà, pleurs, insomnies, envies niées, jalousies repassées, colères muées en soins>> (P 267). Within the <<blanc brasier>> that is the black hole of her melancholia, Pauline is <<Comme un de ces coquillages battus par le temps et les vagues>> (P 234). Outside it, she is left nothing but acting out or sham activism:

<Je> est mort, vive personne! Personne n'est cruel. Personne ne jubile. Ce qui vous paraît un carnage est tout simplement un acte chirurgical, neutre. La dépression agie neutralise la cruauté. La dépression agie est une sorte de pensée, un substitut de la pensée, tout aussi froide et efficace (P 272).

Action which is generated by nothingness points clearly to the idea of a black hole that organises Pauline's subjectivity. As the black hole of her melancholia, like that of the Virgin Mother Isabelle's melancholia in *Soleil noir*, is implicated in her desire for motherhood, it can be related to the subject of this section – or rather of this chapter – <<Le Trou de la Vierge>> (LS 346). In other words, the Kristevan concept of black hole, with its function of nourishing a woman's desire for motherhood, is suggestive of the body of the Virgin that, in Kristeva's novelistic character Hervé Sinteuil's words, is a hole <<destinée à libérer l'humanité de son obsession érotique>> (LS 347). That link further connects the Kristevan concept of black hole with the psychoanalytic theory of the Dark Continent, which shall be the focus of the discussion about <<Le Trou de la Vierge>> in this section.

In the introduction to this chapter, I mentioned the implications of the relationship between the concept of <<Le Trou de la Vierge>> and that of the Dark Continent, which is thematic in colonial and post-colonial studies. Yet, following the above discussion, what is the psychoanalytic theory of the Dark Continent on which the discussion about <<Le Trou de la Vierge>> in this section should focus? From a feminist perspective, as the French feminist theorist Luce Irigaray has pointed out in her reading of Freud's theory of the difference of the sexes in *Speculum de l'autre femme*, it refers to <<La <castration> pour la femme [qui] serait de n'avoir rien à donner à voir, de n'avoir rien>> (1974, 54). In other words, a woman has <<rien de sexe qui se montre dans une forme susceptible d'en fonder la réalité, d'en re-produire la vérité>> (1974, 54). This concept of <<néant de sexe>> or, indeed, <<[une] <castration réalisée>, réellement accomplie>> lays the foundations for Irigaray's theory that, with respect to sexuality, a woman is left with the option <<à une libido <indifférente>, à moins qu'elle ne se soutienne de <l'envie du pénis>>> (1974, 54); she is (only) <<un petit garçon [...] IL N'Y A(URA) JAMAIS EU DE PETITE FILLE>> (1974, 55). Thus, it is not surprising that, in the course of her discovery of her castration, the <<petit garçon>> surrenders to <<l'envie, la jalousie, la haine de la mère – et d'ailleurs de toute femme – qui n'a pas et n'a pu donner un pénis>> (1974, 55). The humiliation of having <<un sexe quasiment invisible>> also leads ineluctably to <<[une] envie d'avoir un machin comme [le pénis, le seul sexe]>> that Freud, in Irigaray's reading, claims to be <<le <devenir une femme normale>>> (1974, 55). Such a desire, naturally, is doomed to failure. The fate of the <<petit garçon>> then is to wish to have a baby

from her father as a compensation for her lack.¹⁷ Her Dark Continent as, to borrow Kristeva's novelistic character Hervé Sinteuil's words, <<destinée à libérer l'humanité de son obsession érotique>> relates the psychoanalytic theory of female sexuality to the concept of <<*Le Trou de la Vierge*>> (LS 347).

On the other hand, the negative connotation of anatomy as destiny a woman's Dark Continent carries, brings to mind the image of the Dark Continent in colonial and post-colonial studies, which is characterised by its eagerness to be penetrated. One of the searching analyses of that image is the feminist post-colonial theorist and critic Anne McClintock's discussion about European porno-tropics in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (1995, 22). By European porno-tropics, McClintock means "a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears"; it consists of "the uncertain continents –Africa, the Americas, [and] Asia" (1995, 22). According to McClintock, "For centuries, the [above] continents [...] were figured in European lore as libidiously [eroticised]"; "visions of the monstrous sexuality of [those] far-off lands, where, as legend had it, men sported gigantic penises and women consorted with apes, feminized men's breasts flowed with milk and militarized women lopped theirs off" abounded in Renaissance travellers' tales (1995, 22). Thus, long before the era of high Victorian imperialism, Africa and the Americas had, through the dissemination of travellers' tales, "become what can be called a porno-tropics for the European imagination" (1995, 22). That history of the Dark Continent in turn becomes a trope for the unknown in myriad discourses. For instance, in philosophical discourse, remarks McClintock, "Philosophers veiled 'Truth' as female, then fantasized about drawing back the veil" (1995, 24). This act of penetrating the unknown in philosophy, as well as in other disciplines, subordinates women to what McClintock calls "mediating and threshold figures by means of which men oriented themselves in space, as agents of power and agents of knowledge" (1995, 24). As such, it is analogous with the sexual scene of origins the concept of <<*Le Trou de la Vierge*>> evokes.

The importance of the analogy between the imperial act of discovery and the religious act of impregnation resides in its relation to the theme of part one in this thesis: "French Feminist Theory or Post-colonial (Feminist) Theory?" Through unmasking the narcissism of western men, who, in McClintock's words, "publicly disavow the creative agency of others (the colonized/women) and arrogate to themselves the power of origins" (1995, 29), the work of

¹⁷ Compare this point with my discussion about "The Discourse of Maternity" in Kristeva's novels in the fifth chapter of this thesis. See also my discussion about how feminists reiterate the Dark Continent motif to suggest the subversive potential of all women in "Textualising the Body *Feminine*" in the sixth chapter of this thesis.

McClintock and that of the French feminist theorist Julia Kristeva are closely intertwined. The problem with this relationship between post-colonial feminist theory and French feminist theory lies in the difference in genre, which draws a boundary between reality and fiction. However, the criticism of the virginal cult in Christianity as guardian of paternal power in the work of Kristeva can be traced back to the essay <<Stabat Mater>> in *Histoires d'amour* that contextualises the historical accounts of the Catholic understanding of motherhood and femininity and confronts it with Kristeva's own experience of motherhood. As Kristeva puts it, the fact about the cult of the Virgin is that <<la chrétienté occidentale>> has organized the <<erreur de traduction [i.e. l'attribut <vierge> pour Marie], qu'elle y projette ses propres fantasmes et y produit une des constructions imaginaires les plus puissantes que l'histoire des civilisations ait connues>> (1993, 298-299). In idealising the way in which the child is brought into being, western Christianity or patriarchy men diminish women's contribution, reduce women to vessels and machines – mere bearers – without creative agency or the power to name; the child must be born again and named by men.¹⁸ The fixation on naming, according to McClintock, grants men “a privileged relation to origins – in the embarrassing absence of other guarantees”, of which male imperialists' marking new lands as their own in the imperial scene of discovery is the counterpart (1995, 29). This parallel between French feminist theory of the cult of the Virgin and post-colonial feminist theory of the Dark Continent or the virgin land shall bring the object of my analysis, namely the representation of the concept of <<Le Trou de la Vierge>> here in Kristeva's novels, to a conclusion.

How then does that aspect of the relationship between French feminist theory and post-colonial feminist theory come into the representation of the concept of <<Le Trou de la Vierge>> in Kristeva's novels? The answer lies in the violent love story of Martin Cazenave and Carole Benedetti in *Les Samourais*. As I have discussed in the previous section, failing to persuade his mistress Carole to have a child with him turns Martin into a narcissist, who chases his real object of love in his painting (LS 139). The description that he inseminates <<la toile, faute de féconder une femme>> (LS 139) relates Kristeva's novel to post-colonial feminist theory, since it associates him with male imperialists who penetrate the Dark Continent or the virgin land. In other words, <<la toile>> is the embodiment of the Dark Continent or the virgin land, which is a substitute for his mistress Carole's body. Incidentally, Carole is portrayed as a reincarnation of the Virgin Mary, which points to Martin's painting as linked with <<Le Trou de la Vierge>>, the

¹⁸ See Luce Irigaray's analysis of the male insistence on marking <<le produit de la copulation>> with <<son nom propre>> in *Speculum de l'autre femme*, p. 21.

concept that constitutes the writer Hervé Sinteuil's understanding of motherhood and femininity in the novel (LS 346-347).

The image of Carole as a reincarnation of the Virgin Mary appears in the narrator Olga Morena's observations on the effect Martin's indulgence in painting has on Carole. As Olga describes, <<Pendant que le nouvel artiste [i.e. Martin] en mouvement perpétuel jetait des giclées de couleurs sur les draps, penché, accroupi, à quatre pattes sur le sol, Carole se retirait comme un chat, à l'abri parmi ses plantes>> (LS 131). Those plants become symbolic of chastity: <<Carole se substituait à la nature – terre, eau, soleil – car, au fond, elle se consumait d'une envie, jamais dite à personne, celle de se dévouer>> (LS 131). That something to which she desires to devote herself is Martin (LS 131). Such a faithful act sanctifies her, an idea which is reinforced by the scene in which she and her grandmother Rosalba placed <<[énormes bouquets] devant la Vierge>> when she spent time with Rosalba in Assisi during her childhood (LS 269). Expressed in her worship for the Virgin Mary is the belief in <<la magie des icônes, la petite fille béate allumant son cierge en attendant que les paupières de la Madone se lèvent et que la mère de Dieu la regarde>> (LS 269), a belief which corresponds to her refusal to be penetrated by Martin. One of the occasions on which she refuses to gratify Martin's sexual desire is a night in the heat of political movements in 1968,¹⁹ during which Martin stays at her place:

Ce soir-là, après avoir longuement caressé sa poitrine plate et ses fesses rebondies, Martin posa sa main sur son ventre et en approcha son sexe dressé:
- Je te fais l'amour, j'ai envie d'un enfant.
Elle le repoussa, brusquement dessoûlée.
- Pas question (LS 121-122).

The idea of safeguarding virginity in this conflict between Carole and Martin produces the image of the Virgin Mary that has been used by Western patriarchy to control the threat of sin.²⁰ The Virgin Mary as the embodiment of men's fear of their own forbidden sexual desires then projects the image of a porno-tropics onto Carole, since sexuality as a taboo implies that the Virgin Mary is an object of desire.

The suggestion that Carole is a fictionalisation of McClintock's concept of porno-tropics likens Martin to male imperialists, with whom Martin shares his view of womanhood. As is clear in the scene in which Martin tries to persuade Carole to have a child with him but Carole turns him down, women are conceptualised as virgin territories (i.e. the Dark Continent) eager for penetration: <<[...] pourquoi refusait-elle, c'était si naturel, si évident. Se serait-il trompé sur

¹⁹ For a more detailed discussion about the importance of the historical event May 1968 in the work of Kristeva, see "Superimposition: Time Embodied" in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

²⁰ See Kristeva's discussion about the *jouissance* of the Virgin Mary and her "bastard" child that presents a threat to the paternal function of the Symbolic order in *Histoires d'amour*, pp. 298-300.

elle, elle n'était donc pas aussi extraordinaire qu'il l'avait cru, quelque chose d'essentiel lui échappait?>> (LS 122)²¹ This question about Carole's aberrant femininity explains Martin's unhealthy obsession with painting that is a surrogate of Carole's body. If the painting is symbolic of what Freud calls "normal womanhood", it is identical to the Dark Continent on which the Freudian theory of woman's sexuality and post-colonial feminist theory of genealogies of imperialism centre; and the Dark Continent is represented by <<Le Trou de la Vierge>> in the novel. The implications of the painting as a representation of <<Le Trou de la Vierge>>, in illustrating Martin's psychic disorders that result from the desire for the real object of love, superimpose the painting (i.e. Carole's body) on the Kristevan concept of black hole that can be seen as the impossible spaces <<de l'<hainamoration>>> (1983, 31). While neither Martin nor Carole is a Virgin Mother in this example of depressive identity, they constitute a picture of the virginal cult in Christianity that informs Kristeva's concept of <<UNE VIERGE MÈRE>> in her discussion about feminine depression in *Soleil noir* (1987, 99). The correlation between the figure of the Virgin Mother in Christianity and that of a Virgin Mother as representative of feminine depression involves the question of Kristeva's theorisation of love, which shall complete this chapter.

A Virgin Mother as the Imaginary Father

Appropriating western men's use of the word virgin in her analysis of a type of feminine depression that causes her patient Isabelle to desire to have a child without wanting to know who fathers it in *Soleil noir* (1987, 100), Kristeva reinterprets the virginal cult in Christianity in the light of the Virgin mother. Here the Virgin is not passively impregnated by the Father but becomes pregnant as she wishes to do. Her child in this sense is produced through "original sin" that is a union of male and female, an image which leads into the object of analysis in this section: the concept of <<le conglomerat père-mère>> in Kristeva's theorisation of love in *Histoires d'amour* (1983, 56). This concept is at the heart of Kristeva's theory of love, which is embodied in the figure of what she calls the <<Père Imaginaire>> (1983, 38).

The term Imaginary Father is derived from Freud's concept of the "father in [an individual's] own personal prehistory"²² who, in Kristeva's reading of the Freudian theory of love, is an amalgam of the two parents in primary narcissism that becomes the basis of <<l'identification primaire>> (1983, 38). It is used by Kristeva to describe the formation of a

²¹ Compare this point with my discussion about "The War Between the Sexes" in Kristeva's novels in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

²² Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 18, p. 107.

successful narcissistic structure that is constituted through love. This love is love for the other, which involves a sense of loss. In other words, an ego is formed through the interaction between the ego-self and the other in the Kristevan narcissistic structure, in which the ego-self is also the other, since a sense of loss is needed for the success of forming a narcissistic psychic structure. The ego-self as the other (i.e. the Imaginary Father) as such is the basis of all idealisation, although it emerges prior to the formation of an object that is a forerunner of any ideal. This means that the formation of an object, which will accompany the emergence of the subject in language, is a precondition for all idealisation. Yet that process is replaced by the figure of the ego-self as the other in the Kristevan narcissistic structure. As the basis of all idealisation, the ego-self as the other in turn bears a resemblance to the Third Party (i.e. the analyst) in Kristeva's discussion about transference and countertransference love.

As I have discussed in the section on Kristeva's novelistic characters as a reincarnation of Narcissus, the Third Party (i.e. the analyst) is the potential Ideal with whom the subject (i.e. the analysand) identifies; simultaneously, it is able to put itself in the subject's place. Its ego-self as the other or the subject is a representation of the figure of the Imaginary Father:

En assurant au patient un Autre amoureux, l'analyste permet – provisoirement – au Moi en proie à la pulsion de s'abriter dans le fantasme que l'analyste est non pas un Père mort, mais un Père vivant: père non désirant mais amoureux, qui réconcilie le Moi idéal avec l'Idéal du Moi et construit l'espace psychique où peut avoir lieu, éventuellement et ultérieurement, une analyse (1983, 44).

This exposition of love in analysis upon which Kristeva's understanding of psychic space in *Histoires d'amour* is based has been retranslated into the representation of the narrators as the embodiment of the Imaginary Father in Kristeva's novels.

I have discussed the way in which the auto-biographer Olga Morena is the Third Party in the love story of Martin Cazenave and Carole Benedetti in *Les Samourais*. Her identification with Martin, who is the embodiment of the subject, points to her as the embodiment of the Imaginary Father, whose ego-self is also the other. As is clear in the scene in which she has a rendezvous with Carole and Martin comes along, she is a loving Other to Martin when Martin bids farewell to her and her son Alex, and she loses herself in thought:

- Adieu, ma belle. Adieu, jeune homme! (Martin.)

- Pas si vite! (Olga l'embrasse.)

Alex avait jeté son biberon par terre et pleurait. Les gens se retournaient sur les cris rageurs du malheureux petit garçon barbouillé de larmes, de poussière et de bouillie. Olga n'entendait rien (LS 439).

The state of trance she is in reflects her compassion for Martin and therefore captures the formation of a successful narcissistic structure. In that structure, her ego-self is incorporated in

the patient Martin, whose life is <<Une vie sans détente, jusqu'à la mort>> (LS 438). Reliving the patient Martin's life which brings back memories of school: <<Saint-Michel, les cours de Bréhal, l'Institut mauve de Strich-Meyer, le déménagement au grenier d'Hervé, les barricades, les maos, la peinture, les reste>> (LS 438-439), she experiences love for the other (i.e. Martin).

In *Le vieil homme et les loups*, love for the other, which involves a sense of loss in psychoanalysis, is reflected in the narrator Stéphanie Delacour's identification with the wolves, of which the subject, Vespasien, is representative,²³ at the end of the novel: <<J'en suis. Une louve. Qui connaît la logique et en parle>> (VH 186). The image of Stéphanie as a she-wolf bears a double meaning: first, as Anna Smith has pointed out in her reading of Barbara Bray's translation of the closing lines of *Le vieil homme et les loups*, it indicates Stéphanie's "simultaneous awareness of the reason for the [...] invasion of wolves and her complicity in it";²⁴ second, it brings out a logic within the animality of human beings. This means that, as a detective and a journalist in search of the truth, Stéphanie knows how the universal logic of crime is constructed and knows empathically that she takes part in it, which points to her as the embodiment of the Imaginary Father. Her ego-self as the other, or the wolves that symbolise the universal logic of crime is a loving Other to Vespasien, whose murderous tendency is a reflection of the invasion of the wolves in Santa Barbara. As Vespasien's wife Alba informs Stéphanie, <<- Ça sent le crime, ici. (Alba [...]) - Il [i.e. Vespasien] a changé ... Tu ne le reconnaîtrais pas ... Son visage ... Le Vieil Homme prétend qu'il devient lui aussi comme les loups. (Alba.)>> (VH 85, 86).

The image of Stéphanie as a she-wolf can be compared with that of her being possessed by <<Le démon de Pauline>> in *Possessions* (P 278). As I have suggested earlier, in unravelling the murder of her friend Gloria, Stéphanie finds herself drawn to Pauline's love for Jerry which leads to the formation of <<Le démon de Pauline>>. Her capacity to understand Pauline's miserable life allows her ego to become the Imaginary Father who is a loving Other to the patient (1983, 44). This means that her ego-self is <<Le démon de Pauline>> that is implicated in Pauline's desire for motherhood, and is reflected in her analysis of life:

Ce qu'elle [i.e. Pauline] a fait, ce qu'elle aurait pu faire, ce que je crois qu'elle a fait, ce qu'elle a sûrement fait prolonge maintenant la vie au-delà de la mort. Sa vie à elle, bien entendu, car je [i.e. Stéphanie] suis sûre qu'elle est désormais libre, vidée de la haine auparavant entassée sous l'image de synthèse. Mais, plus encore, la vie de Jerry que je commence à aimer, moi aussi, on aura tout vu. Sur la passion de Gloria, l'indispensable

²³ See my discussion about the metamorphosis of Vespasien into a wolf man in the third chapter of this thesis.

²⁴ Smith, Julia Kristeva: *Readings of Exile and Estrangement*, p. 196. Bray's translation of the closing lines of *The Old Man and the Wolves* reads, "A female wolf who knows what's behind it all and is prepared to talk about it" (1996, 183).

orthophoniste plaque l'utilité d'un amour raisonné que la décollation a purgé de la dépression pourrissante [...] (P 274).

If <<Le démon de Pauline>> is needed for life to go on, Stéphanie's ego-self that is its double experiences a mother's love for her child; this child is, however, a patient in actual fact. Here the love of the other is also the love of one's own being, be it the purified Pauline or the sympathetic Stéphanie. Through love, a successful narcissistic psychic structure is formed.

Furthermore, as Pauline's desire for motherhood is illustrated by the figure of <<UNE VIERGE MÈRE>> in Kristeva's theorisation of feminine depression in *Soleil noir* (1987, 99), the idea that Stéphanie's ego-self is <<Le démon de Pauline>> adds a new dimension to the representation of the narrators as the embodiment of the Imaginary Father in Kristeva's novels: A Virgin Mother as the Imaginary Father. In other words, in identifying with <<Le démon de Pauline>>, Stéphanie is the embodiment of both the Imaginary Father and a Virgin Mother. This brings us back to the question of the role of the Father/father in the formation of a Virgin Mother, with which this section starts.

In the story of the virginal cult in Christianity, it is the symbolic Father whose absence leaves Mary a Virgin Mother. In the story of the Virgin Mother Isabelle in *Soleil noir*, which, in terms of depression, has close parallels with the portrayal of Pauline Gadeau in Kristeva's novel *Possessions*, it is the father in real life, however, who contributes to the formation of a Virgin Mother. Here the father in real life, as Kristeva tells us in her analysis of the father-daughter relationship in the story of the Virgin Mother Isabelle, is <<à la fois désiré et condamné>> (1987, 104). On the one hand, he may have been, to a certain extent, an identifying solution for his daughter Isabelle (1987, 104). On the other hand, he is also a disappointing figure in Isabelle's life (1987, 104). As Kristeva explains in her recollection of the story of Isabelle's father,

Passé du paysan pauvre au chef d'entreprise, il suscitait l'admiration de ses employés, de ses amis, de ses enfants et d'Isabelle en particulier. Pourtant cet homme tendu vers la réussite avait des sautes d'humeur terribles, sous l'effet de l'alcool surtout, dont il abusait de plus en plus avec l'âge (1987, 103-104).

His emotional instability is what drives Isabelle to becoming a Virgin Mother, because it reminds Isabelle of <<[le] corps masculin excité <outré mesure>>> that is a reflection of her experience of a paroxysmal sexual life (1987, 105). That life fills her years as a teenager and a young woman, an experience which punctuates the end of her depressive episodes (1987, 104).

Not wanting to repeat the experience of a paroxysmal sexual life, Isabelle chooses to be a celibate who gives <<un enfant à son père idéal: non pas à ce père qui exhibait un corps saoul, mais au père à corps absent, donc à un père digne, au maître, au chef>> (1987, 105), says

Kristeva in *Soleil noir*. By becoming a Virgin Mother then, Isabelle can dissociate herself from <<[le] corps masculin excité <outré mesure>>> connected with her experience of a paroxysmal sexual life (1987, 105). The result of that dissociation is Isabelle's attainment of <<une joie modérée, une joie permanente>> (1987, 104), within which she is released from the role of the daughter as a minor, a loser <<dans la compétition avec la perversion présumée de sa mère>> that is realised through the relationship between her mother and <<Le corps masculin, le corps excité et ivre>> (1987, 105). Neither a normal woman who wishes to have a baby from her father nor a jealous daughter who is competing with her mother, Isabelle has reached an absolute in becoming a Virgin Mother: she is the mother *and* the father (1987, 105). As <<le conglomerat père-mère>>, she is what Kristeva calls the <<Père Imaginaire>> in *Histoires d'amour* (1987, 56, 38). Her image as a Virgin Mother who is the Imaginary Father can be compared with the fictional character Stéphanie Delacour's in the above discussion about Stéphanie's ego-self as <<Le démon de Pauline>> in *Possessions*.

The implications of a Virgin Mother as the Imaginary Father, with Stéphanie, focus on how the Third Party rather than the subject exemplifies love as reciprocal identification and detachment. When the real Virgin Mother Isabelle in *Soleil noir* has to detach herself from paternity, with which she also identifies to a certain degree, in order to reinstall herself in love, the fictional Imaginary Father Stéphanie in *Possessions* has to undergo the process of a sense of loss in order to identify herself with the other whom she learns to love. That sense of loss is reflected in her awareness of the fact that she is different from her old self, who is a journalist-detective, after the investigation into the murder of her friend Gloria Harrison: <<Le démon de Pauline possédait déjà Mlle Delacour>> (P 278). The formation of a successful narcissistic structure in this instance, as well as in Isabelle's case, suggests that love of the other is also love of the self. This self-love that is not closed in upon itself but open to the world is different from the one that is symbolised by the Narcissus myth. Here we shall turn to Kelly Oliver's essay "Kristeva's Imaginary Father and the Crisis in the Paternal Function" in *Diacritics*, which is a study of the Kristevan concept of self-love. In that essay, Oliver reads love of the self which is also love of the other in the formation of a successful narcissistic structure "as a fantasy of wholeness" (1991, 53). Such a fantasy, according to her, is illustrated by "adult love in the form of the couple, homosexual or heterosexual" in the work of Kristeva (1991, 53). As she goes on to suggest, Kristeva "maintains that adults seek love in the form of the couple in order to experience a sense of wholeness, which [Kristeva] identifies with a reunion with the mother" (1991, 53). In this sense, "adult love in the form of the couple" is a recreation of the Imaginary Father, who, in

Oliver's reading of Kristeva's theory of love, "once again turns out to be the mother" (1991, 53).²⁵

If the Imaginary Father is the mother, through analysis, the Imaginary Father Stéphanie in Kristeva's novel *Possessions* becomes the loving mother. This reunion with her mother that makes her a fantasy of wholeness is a reflection of what Kristeva describes as <<fonction maternelle>> in the article <<La vierge de Freud>> in *L'Infini* (1987, 26). Extracting that function from Freud's interpretation of the Catholic Virgin Mary, Kristeva uses it to designate a function that, <<déjà susceptible de sens, relève l'archaïque dans des signes et permet non pas l'élaboration mais la sublimation des fixations introjectives et projectives avec <l'originaire>>> (1987, 26). As the embodiment of the Kristevan concept of the maternal function, Stéphanie is herself, not through the Virgin Mother Pauline Gadeau, linked to the image of the Virgin Mother that is the subject of this chapter, which the representation of her relationship with the fictional character <<Lui>> in *Possessions* echoes (P 173). As is clear in Kristeva's description of Stéphanie's <<Lui>>, <<[Stéphanie] ne pouvait l'appeler autrement que Lui: une ellipse par fidélité à une mémoire dont ne subsistait plus qu'une lumière calcinée. Comme un paysage démultiplié de points de vue dont on ne retient qu'une ombre>> (P 173). The idea that Stéphanie's <<Lui>> is <<une ombre>> likens him to the Father who impregnates Mary in the cult of the Virgin, to which Stéphanie's pregnancy in the novel corresponds: <<Non, je [i.e. Stéphanie] ne lui ai pas dit que j'avais gardé l'enfant. À quoi bon, tout était clair entre nous, et j'avais envie d'une joie incarnée>> (P 173). The image of being an unwed mother as <<une joie incarnée>> then draws a parallel between Stéphanie and the Virgin Mother, who is a maternal function already full of meaning in Kristeva's reading of Freud's fantasy of a prehistoric maternal.

Yet what precisely does the definition of Kristeva's <<fonction maternelle>> mean? As a function that is <<déjà susceptible de sens>> but remains in the realm of the imaginary, it is Kristeva's subject-in-process that, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, is a signifying process consisting of the interaction between the symbolic and the semiotic. In other words, the Imaginary Father that has close parallels with a Virgin Mother is a subject-in-process, which refers to love as the embodiment of both the symbolic and the semiotic. This, through the maternal body within which the Law before the Law of the Father, namely the semiotic *chora*, operates, allows love a material existence, otherwise love is a rather improbable, not to say vague,

²⁵ See Kristeva's *Histoires d'amour*, p. 281, in which she says, <<L'enfant de sexe féminin ou masculin, hallucine sa fusion avec une mère nourricière-et-un-père-idéal, avec un conglomerat en somme qui déjà condense deux en un [...] On s'aperçoit vite, cependant et en dernier ressort (c'est-à-dire si le couple devient réellement un, s'il dure), que chacun des protagonistes, il et elle, a épousé, dans l'autre, sa mère>>.

notion for the psychoanalyst to work with. In practice I have explored how Kristeva's representation of the theme of possession in her novels demonstrates the idea of love as a synthesis of ideal and affect in discussing her novelistic characters as a reincarnation of Narcissus. Here I shall further examine how the Virgin Mary's body that runs through my discussion about the concept of <<Le Trou de la Vierge>> and the concept of a Virgin Mother as the Imaginary Father embodies love.

Among Kristeva's female protagonists whom I have discussed in this chapter as the embodiment of the Virgin Mary, it is Stéphanie Delacour's body in *Possessions* that is an open system,²⁶ through which love is present. As a fantasy of wholeness that is represented by the form of the couple – Stéphanie and Him –, this Virgin Mary's body is love. This love involves being the other when Stéphanie is possessed by <<Le démon de Pauline>> at the end of her investigation into the murder of Gloria Harrison in *Possessions* (P 278). The loss of the narcissistic self as a precondition of love, in psychoanalytic terms, means the separation from the mother, which, according to Kristeva, <<est une nécessité biologique et psychique, le jalon premier de l'autonomisation>> for man and for woman.²⁷ If developing an identity, an ego, requires one's independence from the mother, Stéphanie's counterparts, the Virgin Mother Pauline Gadeau in *Possessions* and the Virgin Carole Benedetti in *Les Samouraïs* are a sign of the failure of psychic space to form because of the failure of a sense of loss to form as the basis for love. Their bodies thus embody de-formed love which suggests that they, like Narcissus, are on the way to death; and that sense of death is reflected in the black hole of their melancholia.

In discussing the relationship between the concept of the impossible spaces <<de l'<hainamoration>>> (1983, 31) and the desire for motherhood, I have studied the black hole of the Virgin Mother Pauline Gadeau's melancholia. Her subjectivity, which is organised around nothingness, is a de-formed ego in the context of Kristeva's theory of love. Formed at the very moment of losing her brother in a swimming accident, her subjectivity is closed in upon itself. The reopening of it to the other, the half-deaf child Jerry who is the double of her dead brother, is not possible without murdering her (old) self, of which the heroine Gloria Harrison in the novel is a reflection (P 267).²⁸ Although the fusion of her ego-self and the other, Jerry, suggests a successful narcissistic structure (P 262), this Imaginary Father is contaminated with hatred: it is void of love of the self. The act of projecting her own being onto Jerry, which points to herself as

²⁶ See Kristeva's *Histoires d'amour*, pp. 23-28 and pp. 470-474, for her treatment of the notion of the subject as an open system. See also her essays <<Événement et révélation>> and <<Les Looks sont entrés dans Paris>>.

²⁷ Kristeva, *Soleil noir, dépression et mélancolie*, p. 38.

²⁸ Compare this point with my discussion about Gloria as the desire/rejected other for Pauline in the next chapter.

her unapproachable Other, discussed earlier is not love of the self in the Kristevan narcissistic structure but self-love symbolised by the Narcissus myth. As a reincarnation of Narcissus, the Virgin Mother Pauline embodies a narcissistic structure that is not constituted through love. For Narcissus's subjectivity is formed within a structure which entails that he will not accept a real other to replace his image, with which he is in love, and he is frozen at that point of desiring an object outside himself.

The figure of the de-formed ego as a Virgin Mother, however, appears earlier in Kristeva's novels in the representation of the feminist Carole Benedetti in *Les Samouraïs*. Troubled by her lover Martin Cazenave's desire to have an infant with her, Carole becomes emotionally ill (LS 278). In a letter to her friend, the narrator Olga Morena in the novel, Carole writes, <<Je ne devrais pas t'envoyer ces lettres. Tu penses sûrement: <Quelle régression, quelle salade psychologique!>>> (LS 279) This psychological regression from which Carole suffers is, for Olga, due to Carole's indulgence in self-pity: <<beaucoup de montagnes surgissent de cette imagination qui est un amour démesuré de soi>> (LS 279). Yet, for the psychoanalyst Joëlle Cabarus, the other narrator in the novel, it suggests how ill Carole is:

Une jeune femme brune, maigre, d'un calme solennel dans la douleur. <De la part du docteur Bresson, les antidépresseurs ne me suffisent pas, je voudrais essayer une psychothérapie.> Romain m'envoie rarement ses patients. Cette Carole va sans doute très mal; de plus, elle a dû l'impressionner (LS 372).

Joëlle's diagnosis of Carole's psychic disorders shows a de-formed ego that is illustrative of the Kristevan concept of black hole (1987, 99). As the embodiment of the Kristevan concept of the black hole, Carole's body, which is associated with the concept of <<Le Trou de la Vierge>> (LS 346), signifies a de-formed ego as a Virgin Mother.

The Virgin Mary's body as a de-formed ego, with Carole, is further complicated by the question of its involvement in the concept of the Dark Continent that is the focus of the discussion of love in the theme of part one in this thesis: "French Feminist Theory or Post-colonial (Feminist) Theory?" Here the Virgin Carole whose illness blocks her psychic space is an object of desire and narcissism, which bears a resemblance to Narcissus's image, the otherness that Narcissus wants in the Narcissus myth. Her function as the real object of love in the formation of a narcissistic psychic structure means that she is in the realm of the imaginary, not preparing herself for separation from the mother. The representation of her action of protecting her ego-to-be from a sense of loss as a basis for love is her refusal to have an infant with her lover Martin Cazenave, who, like her, is narcissistic. Neither an ego nor a being in love, since her ego-self-to-be that should also be the other (i.e. Martin) if she were in love is not the other, the Virgin Carole embodies a narcissistic psychic structure that can be compared with the Kristevan concept



of the black hole: nothingness, in its literal sense, as an absolute (1987, 99). That emptiness will be the object of analysis in the discussion about the representation of the female melancholic-depressives in Kristeva's novels in the next chapter.

In this chapter, the concept of emptiness that is implicated in the formation of psychic space returns us to Kristeva's reading of the Freudian conception of narcissism as a screen for emptiness. In providing a framework for Kristeva's theory of love, the Freudian theory of love also produces a counter-critique of the feminist post-colonial theorist and critic Spivak's critique of Kristeva's *Des Chinoises*. This leads subsequently to the findings of certain parallels between French feminist theory of the Dark Continent and post-colonial feminist theory of genealogies of imperialism. The application of the findings to the discussion about Kristeva's representation of love in her novels presents a positive approach to self-love: love of the self involves love of the other. This love in psychoanalysis, for Kristeva, opens the way to the cure. As she has pointed out at the beginning of her book on love, *Histoires d'amour*,

Car qu'est-ce que la psychanalyse sinon une quête infinie de renaissances, à travers l'expérience d'amour recommencée pour être déplacée, renouvelée et, sinon abrégée, du moins recueillie et installée au cœur de la vie ultérieure de l'analysant comme condition propice à son renouveau perpétuel, à sa non-mort? (1983, 9)

This appraisal of the significance of love to psychoanalysis in transference and countertransference may be appreciated by psychoanalysts and literary theoreticians and critics alike, yet is it not the narcissism of the psychoanalyst Kristeva at the same time?

II MELANCHOLIA

La dépression agie neutralise la cruauté.
Julia Kristeva, *Possessions*

In her reconstruction of the murder of the heroine Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*, the narrator Stéphanie Delacour considers that the crime is attributable to the fact that the perpetrator Pauline Gadeau is suffering from an attack of depression. Overcome by depression, Pauline, according to Stéphanie, perpetrates the crime unconsciously, because <<La dépression agie neutralise la cruauté>> (P 272). Her understanding of Pauline's wrongdoing reinforces the idea of Pauline's subjectivity as organised around the black hole of her melancholia.¹ A discussion about the black hole of Pauline's melancholia, which is related to Kristeva's fictional representation of narcissism, will lead off the analysis of Kristeva's novels in this chapter. At issue in that analysis is the idea of Kristeva's novelistic characters as a fictionalisation of her melancholic-depressive patients in *Soleil noir, dépression et mélancolie*.

The composite structure which Kristeva terms melancholic-depressive is, however, in conflict with the fact that important differences exist between melancholia and depression.² Yet, for her, it is still possible to speak of that composite structure for the reason that melancholia and depression have at least two things in common. As she explains in an interview with Dominique Grisoni in *Magazine littéraire*,

D'une part, le *désinvestissement de liens*, la coupure des relations. <Non, semblent dire les mélancoliques et les déprimés, votre société, vos activités, vos paroles: ça ne nous intéresse pas, nous sommes ailleurs, nous ne sommes pas, nous sommes morts>. D'autre part, la *dévalorisation du langage*. Le discours déprimé peut être monotone ou agité, mais la personne qui le tient donne toujours l'impression de ne pas y croire, de ne pas l'habiter, de se tenir hors langage, dans la crypte secrète de sa douleur sans parole (1987, 17).

These similarities between melancholia and depression, which inform her concept of <<un ensemble mélancolico-dépressif>> (1987, 16), constitute her discussion in *Soleil noir*. That discussion, as we shall see, is retranslated into her representation of melancholia and depression in her novels.

¹ See my discussion about the concept of <<Le Trou de la Vierge>> in the previous chapter, pp. 39-40.

² For a brief account of the difference between melancholia and depression, see Kristeva, *Soleil noir*, pp. 18-20.

With respect to her portrayal of the relationship between murder and depression that is rooted in melancholia here in *Possessions*,³ the idea of her theory of melancholia as correlative to her fictional representation of it is also implicated in the question of the formation of a melancholic-depressive's illness. For the act of committing a murder, in her representation of the murderess Pauline Gadeau, is <<un acte chirurgical, neutre>> (P 272), which has to do with the death of Pauline's brother. Pauline's apathy in perpetrating the crime then conveys the presence of Kristeva's concept of nothingness as an absolute in her exploration into feminine depression in *Soleil noir* (1987, 99). This fictional illustration of what Kristeva calls <<trou noir>> in *Soleil noir* (1987, 99) in turn points to the criminal act as a product of Pauline's persistence in mourning for the loss of her brother, who is no longer a real object.

By ushering in the idea of mourning for an ersatz of an object, from which a melancholic-depressive's subjectivity develops, the representation of the criminal act in *Possessions* adds a new dimension to the question of the correlation between Kristeva's theory of melancholia and her representation of it in her novels: the concept of what she calls <<Deuil de la Chose>> in *Soleil noir* (1987, 52-53). The final aim of this chapter is to study how her novels embody her theorisation of <<la Chose>> that is <<un objet archaïque et indispensable>> (1987, 52). Involved in that study is the relationship between French feminist theory and post-colonial (feminist) theory, which is the theme of part one in this thesis and which will emerge from the way the meaning of bereavement is theorised by Kristeva. This entails, however, exploring her concept of melancholia, on which the use of the term <<la Chose>> is founded. To interpret her theory of melancholia, on the other hand, calls for a brief review of her theory of love in *Histoires d'amour* which forms the basis of her understanding of melancholia.

De-formed Love: Melancholia

The Kristevan theory of love, as discussed in the previous chapter, defines love as a synthesis of ideal and affect with which the formation of a successful narcissistic structure coexists. It is symbolised by the figure of the Imaginary Father, who is <<le conglomerat père-mère>> but is called a father because, following Lacan, Kristeva identifies the Symbolic with the Father (1983,

³ John Lechte has pointed out that depression is melancholia's "more temporary form" in his reading of Kristeva's *Soleil noir* in *Abjection, Melancholia and Love*, p. 34.

56).⁴ This means that archaic “object” relations are already “symbolic” and therefore associated with the father, although the child’s first affections are directed towards the mother.⁵ The implication that the mother in this father-mother conglomerate is already full of meaning likens the figure of the Imaginary Father to the Kristevan speaking subject that is a subject-in-process and renders love the embodiment of both the symbolic and the semiotic. A reunion with this loving mother who is a representation of love then is a sign of a signifying process in operation.

To be reunited with the loving mother, however, the would-be speaking subject has to experience a sense of loss which happens at the moment of separating itself from the mother who, as Kristeva terms it in *Soleil noir*, is <<La femme mortifère>> (1987, 38).⁶ An unsuccessful separation from the death-bearing woman, in Kristeva’s formulation of an ego, will result in the would-be speaking subject’s inability to express emotion and affect. This subject thus becomes emotion and affect that are signs of the force of bringing the mother back, as well as of expressing the pain of loss due to the separation from the death-bearing woman.⁷ In this sense, the element of affect, which the would-be speaking subject becomes, is detached from that of ideal in a signifying process from which the speaking subject shall emerge. This suggests that the would-be speaking subject will turn out to be a de-formed ego that is not constituted through love. If love that is represented by an ego which will later be constituted as deformed can be called de-formed love, melancholia is the term Kristeva uses to describe de-formed love that exemplifies an unsuccessful emergence into primary narcissism in which the figure of the Imaginary Father resides. As she puts it in *Soleil noir*,

Chez le mélancolique, l’identification primaire s’avère être fragile et insuffisante à assurer les autres identifications, symboliques celles-ci, à partir desquelles la *Chose érotique* serait susceptible de devenir un *Objet de désir* captivant et assurant la continuité d’une métonymie du plaisir. La Chose mélancolique interrompt la métonymie désirante,

⁴ Kristeva’s position with respect to the phallus in *Histoires d’amour* is, however, not consistent. As Kelly Oliver has noted in her article “Kristeva’s Imaginary Father and the Crisis in the Paternal Function”, in the later chapters in *Histoires d’amour*, Kristeva “suggests that there are advantages to a nonphallogocentric explanation of primary identification. She suggests that there are fathers other than the father of the Law, and she maintains a strict identification between the Father of the Law (Law of the Father) and the Symbolic” (1991, 52).

⁵ See Kristeva’s discussion about the mother as <<le premier objet amoureux des garçons et des filles>> and the difference between this mother and the loving mother, who is an imaginary formation somewhere between the archaic and the symbolic, in her formulation of love in *Histoires d’amour*, pp. 48-49.

⁶ See my discussion about separation from the mother as a precondition of love in Kristeva’s theory of love in the previous chapter, p. 50.

⁷ See also John Lechte’s reading of Kristeva’s theory of melancholia in *Abjection, Melancholia and Love: the Work of Julia Kristeva*, pp. 33-35.

comme elle s'oppose à l'élaboration intrapsychique de la perte (1987, 23).⁸

The function of melancholia as arresting the formation of a successful narcissistic structure presents the would-be speaking subject as unable to cross the bridge to the Symbolic proffered by the Imaginary Father; and the withdrawal from the Symbolic as a consequence of that, will, according to Kristeva, confine the would-be speaking subject to <<soleil noir>> (1987, 13). By black sun, a term which is associated with the poet Gérard de Nerval's poem <<EL DESDICHADO>> (1987, 152-153), Kristeva refers to <<la crypte d'un passé qui [hante Nerval]>> (1987, 155), whose life story then informs her theorisation of <<une insistance sans présence, une lumière sans représentation>> that is characteristic of the symptoms of melancholia (1987, 22). As nothingness, the meaning of the term black sun thus involves the question of <<La Chose mélancolique>> as an ersatz of an object (1987, 23), on which the above explanation of the failure of psychic space to form focuses. Moreover, it is identical to the nature of the Kristevan concept of black hole that is the object of analysis in the following section, for it is in introducing the concept of a black hole to describe her patient Isabelle's <<identité dépressive>> that Kristeva uses the term black sun clinically (1987, 99). The opening of the following section is a discussion about how the relationship between the term black hole and the term black sun in Kristeva's study of melancholia is retranslated into her novels. This will lead into an analysis of the workings of <<La Chose mélancolique>> as black sun in her novels.

⁸ On this point, Kristeva asks her readers to differentiate her statement from Lacan's <<qui commente la notion de *das Ding* à partir de l'*Entwurf* de Freud: <Ce *das Ding* n'est pas dans la relation, en quelque sorte réfléchi pour autant qu'elle est explicite, qui fait l'homme mettre en question ses mots comme se référant aux choses qu'ils ont pourtant créées. Il y a autre chose dans *das Ding*. Ce qu'il y a dans *das Ding*, c'est le secret véritable [...] Quelque chose qui veut. Le besoin et non pas les besoins. la pression, l'urgence. L'état de *Not des Lebens*, c'est l'état d'urgence de la vie [...], la quantité d'énergie conservée par l'organisme à la mesure de la réponse et qui est nécessaire à la conservation de la vie> (*L'Éthique de la psychanalyse*, séminaire du 9 décembre 1959, Seuil, Paris, 1986, p. 58 sq.). Il s'agirait d'inscriptions psychiques (*Niederschrift*) antérieures à quatre ans, toujours <secondaires> pour Lacan mais proches de la <qualité>, de l'effort et de l'endopsychique>. <Le *Ding* comme *Fremde*, comme étranger et même hostile à l'occasion, en tout cas comme le premier extérieur [...] c'est cet objet, *das Ding*, en tant qu'Autre absolu du sujet qu'il s'agit de retrouver. On le retrouve tout au plus comme regret [...]. C'est dans cet état de le souhaiter et de l'attendre que sera cherchée, au nom du principe de plaisir, cette tension optimale au-dessous de laquelle il n'y a plus ni perception ni effort> (p. 65). Et encore plus nettement: <*Das Ding* est originellement ce que donc nous appelons le hors-signifié. C'est en fonction de cet hors-signifié et d'un rapport pathétique à lui que le sujet conserve sa distance et se constitue dans ce monde de rapport, d'affect primaire antérieur à tout refoulement. Toute la première articulation de l'*Entwurf* se fait là autour> (p. 67-68). Cependant, alors que Freud insiste sur le fait que la *Chose* ne se présente qu'en tant que *cri*, Lacan traduit: *mot*, jouant sur le sens ambivalent du terme en français (<mot, c'est ce qui se tait>, <aucun mot n'est prononcé>). <Les choses dont il s'agit [...] sont les choses en tant que muettes. Et des choses muettes ce n'est pas tout à fait la même chose que des choses qui n'ont aucun rapport avec les paroles>, *ibid.*, p. 68-69>> (1987, 23-24).

Automatons

In attempting to relate the Kristevan concept of black hole, which is an application of the term black sun, to Kristeva's representation of melancholia in her novels, I shall start with the image of a melancholic-depressive as an automaton in her description of the story of her melancholic-depressive patient Isabelle in *Soleil noir*. The importance of that image is that it conveys Kristeva's vision of people who are affected by melancholia: organising their subjectivity around the black hole of their melancholia, the melancholic-depressives, whose action is generated by nothingness, are automatons. This becomes the backdrop for her representation of her novelistic characters as melancholic-depressives.

The speech therapist Pauline Gadeau in *Possessions*, whose life story I present in the introduction to this chapter as the embodiment of the issues raised by Kristeva's representation of melancholia in her novels, for instance, is one of Kristeva's fictional characters who are automatons. The way in which she is a fictionalisation of the Kristevan concept of an automaton concerns the accidental death of her brother which leaves her as a melancholic-depressive. Affected by melancholia, she is subject to attacks of depression. That aspect of her life becomes detrimental to her relationships with other characters in the novel, ultimately turning her into a murderess. When she suggests through the narrator Stéphanie Delacour that decapitating the heroine Gloria Harrison <<est tout simplement un acte chirurgical, neutre>> (P 272), the image of her as an automaton emerges out of her melancholia. As an automaton, she, like Kristeva's melancholic-depressive patient Isabelle in real life, organises her subjectivity around what Kristeva calls <<trou noir>> in *Soleil noir* (1987, 99). The black hole of her melancholia then constitutes an example of the correlation between Kristeva's representation of melancholia in her novels and her theory of melancholia in *Soleil noir*.

Here the black hole of Pauline's melancholia is symbolised by the <<blanc brasier>> that consumes her for twenty years after her brother's death (P 267). From <<pleurs, insomnies, envies niées>> to <<jalousies repassées, colères muées en soins>> (P 267), the elements of the <<blanc brasier>> reflect how she transfers the affection she feels for her dead brother, which constitutes her mourning for her loss, to her relationship with her patient Jerry Novak, a half-deaf child, who is Gloria Harrison's son. Given that she is possessive towards Jerry, her hatred towards Gloria after discovering that Gloria will abandon Jerry is destined to be fatal. The need to murder Gloria, for her, however, is a desire to detach herself from her (old) self who, as <<Une femme impuissante, déprimée>> (P 267), is the double of Gloria. Thus, attacking Gloria is attacking her (old) self, <<mais à distance; on se protège, on survit tandis que l'autre trépassé,

disparaît dans le néant qui l'a constituée de tout temps, de toute évidence. On renaît, on repart. Plus impersonnelle, plus sûre>> (P 272), says she through Stéphanie Delacour in the novel.

The process of Pauline's becoming an automaton, which the scene of the crime in *Possessions* represents, indicates that Gloria is also affected by melancholia. Yet Gloria's condition is dissimilar to Pauline's, for the effect Gloria's melancholia has on her puts her in a state of hysteria rather than of impassivity. As seen in Pauline's account of why <<Elle ne l'a jamais beaucoup aimée [i.e. Gloria]>>, Gloria's life as a mother, which is responsible for her fits of depression, is characterised by <<ces effusions, ces déluges de câlins suivis d'une avalanche de claques>> that are tokens of <<[une] Hystérique sans contrôle, pauvre femme>> (P 265). As a madwoman who is affected by melancholia, Gloria conveys a different image of Kristeva's fictional characters who organise their subjectivity around the black hole of their melancholia as automatons. What follows addresses the complexities of the relationship between madness and the Kristevan concept of nothingness as an absolute in the image of a melancholic-depressive as an automaton, an image which is crucial to Kristeva's representation of her characters as melancholic-depressives in her novels.

As I shall examine the image of a melancholic-depressive as an automaton in Kristeva's novels from the perspective of its relation to Kristeva's study of her melancholic-depressive patients in real life in *Soleil noir*, I shall ask the question in discussing the story of Gloria in *Possessions*: which of Kristeva's melancholic-depressive patients is Gloria modelled on? The answer to the question is the woman writer Marguerite Duras. While she is not Kristeva's real-life patient, she is analysed through her texts that are the inspiration for Kristeva's conceptualisation of madness as a reflection of melancholic-depressive identity:

Avec Duras, nous avons la folie en pleine lumière: <Je suis devenue folle en pleine raison⁹.> Nous sommes présents au rien du sens et des sentiments que la lucidité accompagne dans leur extinction, et assistons à nos propres détresses neutralisées, sans tragédie ni enthousiasme, clairement, dans l'insignifiance frigide d'un engourdissement psychique, signe minimal mais aussi signe ultime de la douleur et du ravissement (1987, 236).

The effect Duras's books have on us is symbolic of the fact that she is affected by melancholia. The idea that melancholia resides in textual practice consequently redefines the essence of madness: it is what Kristeva calls <<un naufrage des mots face à l'affect innommable>> (1987, 264). By that, Kristeva refers to a textual illness that consists of <<Les discours elliptiques des

⁹ Here Kristeva asks us to compare this line with Duras's *L'Amant*, pp. 105-106.

personnages [et] l'obsédante évocation d'un <rien> qui résumerait la maladie de la douleur>> in the work of Duras (1987, 264).¹⁰

Suffering as the source of Duras's melancholic-depressive texts, or Duras's melancholia as expressed in the form of madness is the point at which the story of Duras in *Soleil noir* can be said to be the fountainhead of the story of Gloria in *Possessions*. Just as the former emphasises <<le <rien> à dire comme manifestation ultime de la douleur>> (1987, 264), so the latter stresses outpourings of emotion/depression as expression of the unbearable suffering of living death. This correlation between Kristeva's clinical study of the signification of the work of Duras and her fictional representation of a madwoman who is affected by melancholia puts the concept of suffering at the heart of an analysis of Kristeva's novelistic characters whose melancholia is embodied in their madness.

With Gloria in *Possessions*, her suffering which leads to the formation of the black hole of her melancholia as madness embraces the difficulties of bringing up her handicapped son Jerry and of working out her affair with her lover Michael Fish. As the narrator Stéphanie Delacour in the novel has pointed out in her reconstruction of Gloria's life before Gloria was murdered, <<Chaque jour, à chaque minute, chaque seconde, [Gloria] s'évertuait à faire naître une passerelle reliant la cachette où se terrait Jerry à la lumière sonore des humains>> (P 78). At the same time, Gloria was trapped in her belief that she was in love with Michael Fish, who, on the other hand, <<n'en voulait qu'à son [i.e. Gloria's] argent, à son héritage et à ses tableaux>> (P 152). The result of these difficulties is Gloria's emotional instability.

Failing to control her excessive love for Jerry, which is accompanied by her unwitting compulsion to hurt him, Gloria develops a complex about being a mother.¹¹ For Jerry, she is <<la sorcière, [parce] qu'elle faisait tout pour [Jerry]>> (P 81). Yet Jerry knows <<qu'il était nul, qu'il n'y avait pas de limites à la connerie, la sienne, naturellement, qu'il méritait la mort tout autant que sa mère, parce que c'était d'elle que tout venait, du moins elle en était persuadée, et lui aussi par conséquent>> (P 81). In the end, both Gloria and Jerry, onto whom Gloria projects her devotion and frustration, lose heart: <<Elle, tragédienne dans ses cris et ses larmes, lui, nauséux et muet, pauvre proie impotente d'une rage implacable>> (P 81). The explosion of the tension between mother and son points clearly to Gloria as being brought to the brink of madness, which continues to be present in Gloria's violent relationship with her lover Michael Fish. As is clear in <<l'éternelle scène de ménage>> Gloria has with Michael Fish (P 151), Jerry is the stumbling

¹⁰ I shall develop this point further in the next section, see p. 68.

¹¹ See also my discussion about the relationship between Kristeva's portrayal of Gloria's maternal behaviour and the object-relations theorist Nancy Chodorow's reworking of D. W. Winnicott's concept of a good enough mother in "A Her/ethics of Maternity" in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

block to Gloria's psychic life. He, according to Michael Fish, <<est incapable de gérer quoi que ce soit>> and should be sent to Switzerland to stay in a special institution if Gloria is to live a life of normality (P 265). In other words, Jerry's existence threatens Gloria's sanity.

The irony of Michael Fish's putting the blame on Jerry as the source of Gloria's melancholic-depressive identity is that he, with his violent treatment of Gloria, also contributes to the roots of Gloria's emotional instability. In the scene in which he asks Gloria to deal with the problem of Jerry's future, for instance, he abuses his position as Gloria's lover to disinherit Jerry, which disorients Gloria: <<Gloria pleure, refuse, promet de tout arranger, de faire ce que veut Fish, tout, sans exception, pourvu qu'il reste auprès d'elle, lui, Fish. L'homme claqué la porte, comme pour surenchérir; les sanglots de Gloria montent jusqu'au studio de Jerry>> (P 265). Helpless, Gloria as a victim of domestic violence¹² projects an image of hysteria that is symptomatic of a proclivity towards irrationality. When she unloads the conflict between herself and Michael Fish onto Jerry, who simply accepts <<les injures et les coups>> (P 81), the image of her as a madwoman arises from an emotional instability relating to the pain Michael Fish inflicts on her. As mentioned earlier, losing control has turned Gloria into <<[une] Hystérique [...], pauvre femme>> in Pauline's view and a <<tragédienne>> in Stéphanie's view (P 265, 81).

The fact that Gloria is a madwoman affected by melancholia suggests the interaction of madness and the Kristevan concept of nothingness as an absolute in Gloria's melancholic-depressive identity. A representation of her melancholic-depressive identity appears in the way she organises her daily routine:

Assommant? Pas vraiment. Gloria avait atteint un état d'efficacité insensible qui aurait pu être celui de la matière à vitesse supersonique: au-delà de Mach 2.9, le mouvement accumule les événements, mais aucune surface ne résiste au flux pour en mesurer la charge. C'était aussi simple que ça, et dans cette agilité d'au-delà du mur du son, elle exécutait ses tâches avec une légèreté robotique. Car, précisément, ce n'était plus <elle> – mais qui, alors? Cet anonymat supersonique ne cachait-il pas une agitation, une aliénation, la folie même? Par miracle, Gloria dissolvait les démons qui l'habitaient peut-être sans jamais les laisser apparaître au grand jour (P 76).

In repressing her suffering, Gloria acts like an automaton. Her subjectivity is organised around nothingness as an absolute which is a reflection of the black hole of her melancholia; and madness is the essence of that nothingness. This brings us back to the idea of Kristeva's melancholic-depressive characters as a fictionalisation of Duras's texts that embody the fact that Duras is a madwoman affected by melancholia.

¹² Compare this point with my discussion about the discourse of "The War Between the Sexes" in Kristeva's novels in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

In terms of Kristeva's female protagonists as a fictionalisation of Duras's texts that embody the fact that Duras is a madwoman affected by melancholia, the feminist Carole Benedetti in *Les Samourais* is the counterpart of Gloria in *Possessions*. The story of Carole, in addition, bears a close parallel to that of Gloria: it develops alongside the problem of a distressing love life that Carole lives. Upset by her lover Martin Cazenave, who forces her to bear him a child, Carole succumbs to emotional instability that results in depression. When she is attacked by depression, she asks:

Que croire, qui croire? Martin court je ne sais où, et, puisqu'il s'éloigne de moi, j'ai tendance à penser qu'il court vers la mort. Mais il viendra toujours se retrouver contre moi, sur le matelas du loft, de temps en temps, j'en suis sûre. Quand même, il m'arrive de penser: <Martin n'est plus.> Plus de Rosalba, plus de Martin, plus de Fiesole. Je ne peux plus disposer de moi, personne non plus ne veut disposer de moi (LS 278-279).

The anxieties of being a mistress that engulf Carole here in this passage, which are expressed in a letter she writes to her friend Olga Morena, reflect the formation of her melancholic-depressive identity as a product of her suffering. Her painful experience of falling in love with Martin, whom she describes as a <<fantôme>> (LS 437), then finds its expression in the psychotic speech that dominates the psychotherapy sessions she has with the psychoanalyst Joëlle Cabarus.

Recounting the first session in which Carole receives psychotherapy from her, for instance, Joëlle remembers how Carole expresses her suffering through fragments of speech that start with <<<Le ciel est collé, il ne s'ouvrira plus jamais.> <Plus aucune clarté, il n'y a que de la nuit dans mon cerveau, et quand le noir s'allège, la mort avance tout droit>>> (LS 372). These psychotic utterances of Carole's lead Joëlle to ponder the need for stopping Carole from rambling, because <<Si [elle] la laisse ainsi pasticher des poèmes toute seule, [Carole] se suicidera>> (LS 372). Suicidal, Carole, as Joëlle implies here in her analysis of Carole's condition, is a living corpse whose melancholic-depressive identity embodies madness that is reminiscent of the Kristevan concept of textual illness in *Soleil noir*: <<un naufrage des mots face à l'affect innommable>> (1987, 264). The presence of that concept in the contents of Carole's psychotic speech produces the image of Carole as a madwoman who is affected by melancholia. This is further complicated by the characteristic of Carole's psychotic speech as interrupted by a stream of <<Silence>> that signifies the black hole of Carole's melancholia as a painful void:

Silence.

- Vous ne m'avez pas parlé des vôtres. [(Joëlle.)]

- Je vois les gens en tulle. Mes mots passent au travers. Personne n'est solide.

[(Carole.)]

Silence.

- Vous l'êtes, en un sens, puisque vous avez une histoire en vous. [(Joëlle.)]

Silence.

- *Je suis comme l'herbe. Je ne fais rien, je n'ai jamais rien eu à faire.* [(Carole.)]

Silence.

- *Comme l'herbe?* [(Joëlle.)]

- *L'herbe n'a rien à faire, parce qu'elle ne fleurit pas. Elle passe le jour à attendre les lapins qui viennent la manger, et la nuit à recueillir la rosée qui lui donne à boire.* [(Carole.)]

J'attends. [(Joëlle.)] *Silence* (LS 373).

The difficulty Carole has in telling her life story has to do with the fact that she organises her subjectivity around nothingness as an absolute. At this point the contents of her psychotic speech, which embody the Kristevan concept of madness as textual illness, can be related to Kristeva's discussion about the concept of a black hole in *Soleil noir*. This link points to Carole as an automaton, who is a madwoman affected by melancholia.

The implications of Carole's psychotic speech as a representation of the Kristevan concept of madness as the "nothing" bring together Carole and Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*; both are a fictionalisation of Duras's texts that embody the fact that Duras is a madwoman affected by melancholia. As the examples of Kristeva's female protagonists whose melancholia is embodied in madness, Carole and Gloria are also representative of failed love-seekers. Unable to reach an agreement on the question of motherhood in her problematic relationship with her lover Martin Cazenave, Carole gives herself up to self-destruction in *Les Samourais*. Meanwhile, not preparing to face the fact that her son Jerry is handicapped, Gloria falls victim to emotional instability that worsens her shaky relationship with her lover Michael Fish in *Possessions*. This aspect of Kristeva's fictional representation of a melancholic-depressive whose identity corresponds to madness brings up the question of the relationship between motherhood and melancholia.

In relation to Kristeva's case histories in *Soleil noir*, the relationship between motherhood and melancholia, which is involved in unhappy love lives, is pictured in two of the stories of Kristeva's melancholic-depressive patients who are women with successful professional lives (1987, 91-105). These two women whose suffering is the portrait of their relationships with their husbands or lovers are Marie-Ange and Isabelle. Betrayed by their loved ones, who, however, are chosen by them to remind themselves of their suffering, Marie-Ange and Isabelle direct their attention towards lesbianism and single parenthood. Their refusal of the paternal law, which is an expression of feminine depression, is something which Kristeva applies in her fictional representation of the correlation between domestic problems and a (would-be) mother's melancholia and depression. On this point, the story of Marie-Ange is partially retranslated into

that of the feminist Carole Benedetti in *Les Samourais*, and a comparison can be made between the story of Isabelle and that of the gifted translator Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*.

Described by Kristeva as <<La femme de Don Juan>> (1987, 94), Marie-Ange is frigid because of her husband's infidelity. She, as Kristeva goes on to explain, <<accède souvent au désir hétérosexuel en refoulant les plaisirs archaïques, voire le plaisir lui-même: elle cède à l'hétérosexualité dans la frigidité>> (1987, 96). Her sexuality as such is the locus of her suffering which is the source of her melancholia and depression, an idea which is present in Kristeva's fictional representation of Carole Benedetti's frigidity in *Les Samourais*. In the scene in which the narrator Olga Morena in *Les Samourais* analyses Carole's emotional problems, for instance, the idea of a woman's frigidity as a reflection of domestic problems is expressed in Carole's desire for surrounding herself with plants that are representative of faithfulness: <<Seule une plante peut être fidèle. Éphémère, mais, tant qu'elle vit, d'une permanence fiable>> (LS 131). This form of escape to which Carole turns in response to her lover Martin Cazenave's unfaithfulness generates in Carole a sense of security that is simultaneously sardonic: <<Air et terre, muette et souple, aquatique et lumineuse, Carole se sentait parmi les siens dans ce monde végétal. Fidèle parmi les fidèles. Un peu mélancolique, un peu ironique [...]>> (LS 133). Feeling natural yet melancholy in her refuge that is synonymous with her frigidity, Carole is a regressive melancholic-depressive, whose denial of (hetero)sexuality is implicated in the question of motherhood.¹³

The idea of turning to motherhood as a consequence of suffering from melancholia and depression which is implicated in domestic problems appears in Kristeva's case histories in the story of Isabelle in *Soleil noir*. As I had discussed in the previous chapter, losing faith in her husband, Isabelle turns to motherhood to have <<un <compagnon sûr>>> as a solution for her problems (1987, 100). Her child whom she desires to have <<pour elle-même>> accordingly comes to possess her (1987, 100), a fact which becomes the theme of Kristeva's fictional representation of the relationship between Jerry and his mother Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*. As seen in Stéphanie Delacour's analysis of what Jerry means to Gloria in the novel, Jerry is Gloria's whole world; <<Plus rien>> in Gloria's world since she had Jerry, <<Mais c'était à peine si Gloria s'en apercevait, elle ne regrettait rien, vivait à fond>> (P 73), remembers Stéphanie. This fictionalisation of the story of Isabelle, which reiterates the relationship between possession and motherhood, is likewise associated with the question of domestic problems. Betrayed by her husband Stan Novak (P 46), Gloria does not find love in her relationship with her lover Michael Fish either. Her unsuccessful love life subsequently affects her devotion to Jerry,

¹³ I shall develop this point further in the next section, see pp. 72-73.

which results in her turning into a melancholic-depressive who embodies the Kristevan concept of madness as the “nothing”.

The role of domestic problems in producing female melancholic-depressives in Kristeva's fictional representation of her psychoanalytic study of the relationship between motherhood and melancholia implies that men are not as afflicted by problems with their love lives as women. Yet this is not true in the story of Carole Benédetti's lover Martin Cazenave in *Les Samouraïs*. Devastated by Carole's decision to deny him fatherhood, Martin, like Carole and Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*, is emotionally unstable. His suffering also leads to his melancholia and depression, which points to him as a male protagonist of Kristeva's who is a fictionalisation of Duras's texts that embody the fact that Duras is a madwoman affected by melancholia. A discussion about the way in which he is a fictionalisation of Duras's texts that embody the fact that Duras is a madwoman affected by melancholia shall bring this section to a conclusion.

At issue in making a comparison between Kristeva's fictional representation of Martin as a melancholic-depressive in *Les Samouraïs* and her psychoanalytic study of the work of Duras in *Soleil noir* is an understanding of the role of suffering in the formation of Martin's melancholic-depressive identity as madness. Here the cause of Martin's suffering, inasmuch as it centres on his problematic relationship with his lover Carole, is expressed in his action painting.¹⁴ As the narrator Olga Morena asks in her observations on the effect a lamentable love life has on Martin,

Est-ce l'économie de gestes et de mots chez Carole qui inspirait à Martin son horreur des discours? Il continuait à militer, mais les tracts étaient désormais rédigés par Frank [i.e. son ami]. De plus en plus, il se laissait envahir par cette rage contre les surfaces, qui éclatait dans les gouttelettes de peinture éclaboussant les vitres, les toiles, les murs (LS 137).

Silent and violent, Martin's action painting embodies the interaction between the Kristevan concept of nothingness as an absolute and that of madness; it thus associates Martin with the work of Duras in Kristeva's understanding of <<la maladie de la douleur>> in *Soleil noir* (1987, 264). This fictional representation of expressing suffering by way of the “nothing” then makes Martin's painting a reflection of the black hole of his melancholia. Within that void, Martin, according to his friend Frank, <<sera toujours ballotté d'une passion à l'autre, d'une mort à l'autre. Et cetera>> (LS 278).¹⁵

¹⁴ Action painting is, as the Penguin Group define in *The New Penguin English Dictionary*, “abstract art in which spontaneous techniques, e.g. throwing, dripping, or smearing, are used to apply paint” (2000, 13).

¹⁵ Compare this point with my discussion about Martin as a <<faux-self>> in the sixth chapter of this thesis.

The unending attacks of emotional instability in turn leave Martin fatigued. As his lover Carole says, after recovering from her melancholia and depression, to her friend Olga Morena about Martin's condition, he is becoming an automaton as a result of his suffering: <<Il ne fait pas de conférences de presse>> on his paintings any more, <<Il a voulu retrouver Saint-André-des-Arts avant de mourir, c'est tout ce qu'il dit. Pas dramatique du tout, impavide comme un fantôme, effrayant de calme>> (LS 437). The lifelessness of Martin's speech and action thus links Martin with Kristeva's female melancholic-depressives; each of the group embodies the image of a melancholic-depressive as an automaton, which is associated with the Kristevan concept of black hole. The recurrence of the story of Kristeva's melancholic-depressive patient Isabelle in this correlation between Kristeva's representation of melancholia in her novels and her theory of melancholia in *Soleil noir* further poses the question: what does the black hole of a melancholic-depressive's melancholia as nothingness mean? The answer to this question lies in Janice Doane and Devon Hodges's study of Kristeva's *Soleil noir* in *From Klein to Kristeva: Psychoanalytic Feminism and the Search for the "Good Enough" Mother*, in which they trace Kristeva's theorisation of the concept of a black hole back to the French psychoanalyst André Green's discussion about "the ramifications of what he calls 'the dead mother complex'" in his attempt to synthesise "psychoanalytic theories of loss" (1992, 57). This calls for an explanation of Green's concept of the dead mother complex, a concept with which the following discussion starts and which can be related to Kristeva's novels through her representation of the way in which melancholic-depressives as automatons experience life.

The Dead Mother Complex

At the beginning of his essay on the dead mother complex in *On Private Madness*, Green defines the dead mother as "a mother who remains alive but who is, so to speak, psychically dead in the eyes of the young child in her care" (1996, 142). The complex the child has about the dead mother reveals itself in the child's depression; and the "*essential characteristic of this depression*", according to Green, "*is that it takes place in the presence of the object, which is itself absorbed by a bereavement*" (1996, 149). This means, in Doane and Hodges's reading of Green's concept of the dead mother complex in *From Klein to Kristeva*, that the mother "is self-absorbed as a result of a loss" and the child "experiences her absorption as a catastrophe, as a narcissistic wound" (1992, 58). As they go on to explain,

In place of positive primary narcissism, which Green characterizes as 'tending towards unity and identity,' the child develops negative primary narcissism that is connected with feelings of emptiness. The 'dead' object thus draws the child toward a 'deathly, deserted universe' [...] (1992, 58).

This understanding of the “dead” object calls to mind Kristeva’s <<La femme mortifère>> in *Soleil noir* (1987, 38), whom the melancholic-depressives absorb within the structure of their identity that is a black hole.¹⁶ The similarity between Kristeva’s death-bearing woman and Green’s dead mother points to the correlation between Green’s concept of the dead mother complex and Kristeva’s theorisation of the concept of a black hole.

In illustrating the essence of the Kristevan concept of nothingness as an absolute, Doane and Hodges’s research on the origins of Kristeva’s death-bearing woman provides an entry into understanding the melancholic-depressives’ inability to feel which is the object of analysis in this section. Here the melancholic-depressives as automatons because of their identification with what Doane and Hodges call “the mother that they have encrypted within themselves” (1992, 62) is first and foremost reflected in their incapacity to use language to compensate for the lost object. <<[A]symbolie>> is the term Kristeva uses to describe that symptom of melancholia and depression (1987, 18), a symptom which leaves the melancholic-depressives nothing but despair as the only meaning life has for them. Language in this situation “is [thus] always foreign, never maternal” to the melancholic-depressives, notes John Lechte in his study of Kristeva’s theory of melancholia in *Abjection, Melancholia and Love: the Work of Julia Kristeva* (1990, 34). As Lechte goes on to explain, “Words have become detached from [the melancholic-depressives’] link with energy drives; or emotions have become separated from symbolic constructions” (1990, 34). <<La langue morte>> (1987, 64), as Kristeva terms it in *Soleil noir*, the melancholic-depressives speak then foreshadows their suicide. This idea brings us back to the discussion about Kristeva’s fictional representation of the psychotic speech that is a sign of her melancholic-depressive characters’ suicidal tendencies in her novels.

In the protagonist Martin Cazenave’s case in *Les Samourais*, which ends our exploration into the question of Kristeva’s novelistic characters as a fictionalisation of her melancholic-depressive patients, the dead language he speaks makes his lover Carole feel beyond <<la terreur: une statue de pierre sur la tombe qu’il n’est pas encore>> (LS 437). His asymbolia which is associated with his suicidal tendencies is supported by his self-destructive behaviour which is linked with his action painting (LS 137). In addition to submerging himself in action painting to try to rid himself of domestic problems, he also makes friends with Scherner’s friends (LS 278),

¹⁶ As Martha J. Reineke has pointed out in *Sacrificed Lives: Kristeva on Women and Violence*, “in refusing loss, [the melancholic-depressives] absorb alterity within the structure of their own identity: they carry the maternal Thing inside” (1997, 92). See also Ewa Ziarek’s article “Kristeva and Levinas: Mourning, Ethics, and the Feminine” in *Ethics, Politics, and Difference in Julia Kristeva’s Writing*, p. 71.

whose influence on him finishes him off.¹⁷ As his friend Olga Morena comments, in a rendezvous with his lover Carole, on how his self-destructive behaviour changes his appearance: <<On [i.e. Olga et Carole] voit de loin la silhouette décharnée de Martin: élégance du cuir noir, cheveux blancs d'épuisement, maigreur de cadavre. Sourire crispé qui s' imagine dégage, d'outre-tombe>> (LS 438). The smile he gives Olga and Carole, which is a symbol of imminent death here, is illustrative of the fact that he is suicidal, which indicates his suggestion that <<après tout, chacun a le droit de se brûler comme il veut>> (LS 438). His view of suicide points to despair as a legacy of melancholia and depression.

The loss of appetite for life as a characteristic of those who suffer from melancholia and depression dominates not only Martin's dead language but also Kristeva's other melancholic-depressive characters' psychotic speech. With Martin's lover Carole Benedetti in *Les Samouraïs*, the asymbolia which is indicative of her suicidal tendencies is represented by her subconscious acknowledgement that <<*Je suis dans la tombe d'une particule nucléaire*>> (LS 372). The image of her as an automaton pictured in her psychotic speech can be related to the dead mother complex that affects a melancholic-depressive's ability to feel. This means that she carries the dead mother or the death-bearing woman inside. In doing so, she becomes what she declines to express: emotion and affect. Her denial of representation thus reproduces the portrait of a de-formed ego in the discussion about de-formed love as melancholia earlier in this chapter.

In Kristeva's terminology, a melancholic-depressive's refusal to bring language to life is a denial of what she calls <<*dénégation*>> (1987, 54). A brief explanation of the *dénégation* of language is that <<Les signes sont arbitraires parce que le langage s'amorce par une *dénégation* (*Verneinung*) de la perte, en même temps que de la dépression occasionnée par le deuil>> (1987, 55), writes Kristeva in *Soleil noir*. She further depicts the process of the formation of the *dénégation* of language:

<J'ai perdu un objet indispensable qui se trouve être, en dernière instance, ma mère>, semble dire l'être parlant. <Mais non, je l'ai retrouvée dans les signes, ou plutôt parce que j'accepte de la perdre, je ne l'ai pas perdue (voici la *dénégation*), je peux la récupérer dans le langage> (1987, 55).

The necessity of matricide in the formation of the *dénégation* of language is absent from a melancholic-depressive's identity, and causes the assimilation of the speaking being and the loss. As the loss, the speaking being is, in John Lechte's understanding of Kristeva's formulation of a de-formed ego, "weighed down by tears and silence" (1990, 35); its suffering suggests a link between melancholia and the Kristevan concept of madness.

¹⁷ See my discussion about Martin's self-destructive behaviour in the previous chapter, p. 33.

This brings us back to the work of Duras, which informs Kristeva's theorisation of madness as textual illness that conjures up a "nothing" in *Soleil noir*. Here the "nothing", according to Kristeva, is thrust upon <<une conscience troublée l'horreur de la Seconde Guerre mondiale et, indépendamment d'elle mais en parallèle, le malaise psychique de l'individu dû aux chocs secrets de la biologie, de la famille, [et] des autres>> (1987, 233). The practice of Duras as such is a reflection of the fact that she suffers from asymbolia. Her asymbolia, for Kristeva, is representative of illness triggered by the contemporary world and is thus trans-historical (1987, 264). Affected by that trans-historical <<maladie de la douleur>> (1987, 264), we are all, according to John Lechte in his interpretation of Kristeva's view of post-modernity, "risking collective suicide, or at least a symbolic death" (1990, 39). The prevalence of asymbolia in the world where we, the post-modern, dwell becomes the foundation on which Kristeva builds her fictional construction of social reality.¹⁸

An important feature of Kristeva's fictional representation of hopelessness as the essence of the contemporary world is the canker of violence.¹⁹ Present in the scenes of the fight to the death between the couples in her novels and particularly in the scene of the murder of Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*, violence embodies Kristeva's sentiments on the pernicious effect of <<la maladie de la douleur>> (1987, 264). For the protagonists who quarrel and attack in these scenes are victims of the dead mother complex. Two of these victims are the couple Martin Cazenave and Carole Benedetti in *Les Samouraïs*: not only is Martin, the aggressor, self-destructive but also Carole is suicidal as a result of leading a violent love life. Their suffering which is symptomatic of the dead mother complex is an illness shared by other couples who live a life of domestic violence in *Le vieil homme et les loups* and *Possessions*.

In terms of the story of the couple Vespasien and Alba Ram in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, the fight to the death between them leads to their inability to feel. As their professor, the Old Man, diagnoses, ordinariness <<éponge l'ardeur, l'aigreur, la torpeur, le leurre, l'erreur, l'horreur, le bonheur, la stupeur, les heures>> that constitute Vespasien and Alba's life, as well as our own (VH 52). If <<Il [nous] manque cette vertu physique, ce jet verbal, ce plaisir de l'insomnie qui portent les hors pairs, les solitaires heureux>>, warns the Old Man, <<Alors, [nous sommes] réduits à la solution d'Alba et de Vespasien. Jouir à deux du banal>> (VH 53). This solution, which points to us, like Alba and Vespasien, as on the way to death, reflects our asymbolia, an illness which will turn us into <<mornes reduplications de nos destins biologiques,

¹⁸ Compare this point with my discussion about the concept of an "embodied time" in the fourth chapter of this thesis, in which I suggest that Kristeva's novels reflect social reality through their fictional characters.

¹⁹ Compare this point with my discussion about the theme of violence in Kristeva's novels in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

viscères balbutiantes>> (VH 52). In this sense, Alba and Vespasien, who are the fictional doubles of us all, suffer from asymbolia, which is related to domestic violence.²⁰ Their suffering thus embodies the theme of violence as characteristic of the Kristevan theory of melancholia and is expressed in the Old Man's meditations on the death of their souls: <<il n'y a pas d'échappatoire, c'est comme ça, c'est absolument domestique, c'est domestiquement absolu, l'inexorable fadaise de la passion quelconque, la banalité salement soutenable de la mort>> (VH 53). Waiting for death as <<ce qu'il reste des grands projets, des idéaux flamboyants>> in their life leads them to indulge in the treadmill of <<crasse psychique>> (VH 54). The void in their life in turn produces the image of them as automatons, an image which is related to the question of the representation of psychotic speech in Kristeva's novels.

How then does the interaction between Alba and Vespasien involve psychotic speech that conveys the presence of what Kristeva calls <<La langue morte>> in *Soleil noir* (1987, 64)? The answer lies in the fight to the death between the couple, of which the "illogical" conversation between them in section 8 in the chapter entitled *Anamorphoses* in *Le vieil homme et les loups* is representative. This "illogical" conversation consists of non-linkage between utterances and images that are unrelated:

- La plage est polluée et les femmes sont moches: de la chair sans grâce.
(Vespasien.)
- J'ai vu une mouette qui fonçait à pic pour pêcher son poisson. Cruelle et précise, belle. (Alba.)
- Tu ne penses qu'aux oiseaux et à toi. On ne peut pas avoir de conversation.
(Vespasien.)
- La lune était pleine, cette nuit. (Alba.)
- C'est bien ce que je disais. (Vespasien.)
- Silence d'Alba [...] (VH 60).

Here what Alba says to Vespasien is not linked to a dénégarion that expresses her emotion. <<La langue morte>> she speaks reflects the logicalness of Vespasien's speech, in which he expresses his anger about the way Alba talks to him. Yet he is not immune to asymbolia that affects Alba. While Alba refuses to bring language to life, he has a craze for creating an image of himself as a powerful man, which leaves him as a living corpse: <<-De plus en plus. Tu en veux, toi aussi, je le sais. (Alba.) - Peux m'en passer. Pas mon métier. Le spectacle n'est quand même pas un crime. (Vespasien)>> (VH 61). The obsession he has with publicity associates asymbolia that is a symptom of melancholia and depression with mania.

²⁰ Compare this point with Freud's discussion about family romance and psychosis in his letter to Wilhelm Fliess in *The Origins of Psycho-Analysis*, pp. 184-187.

Mania as involved in asymbolia that is a symptom of melancholia and depression calls for an explanation. Sigmund Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia"²¹ is one of the original studies of the relationship between melancholia and mania, which I shall discuss here. In that essay, Freud suggests that the "most remarkable characteristic of melancholia, and the one in most need of explanation, is its tendency to change round into mania – a state which is the opposite of it in its symptoms" (1957, 253). To put the psychoanalytic impression of that transition into words, "the content of mania is no different from that of melancholia, [...] both disorders are wrestling with the same 'complex', but [...] probably in melancholia the ego has succumbed to the complex whereas in mania it has mastered it or pushed it aside" (1957, 254).²² Thus, the manic subject is liberated from the object which was the cause of its suffering; and it plainly demonstrates getting over the loss of the object "by seeking like a ravenously hungry man for new object-cathexes" (1957, 255).²³ This eagerness for new object-cathexes, which is a sign of mania, is represented in the fictional work of Kristeva by Vespasien and other characters.

In relation to the story of Vespasien in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, the Freudian concept of the manic subject as a new object-cathexes seeker finds its expression in the description of Vespasien as a greedy maniac. As the narrator Stéphanie Delacour has noted in her analysis of the process of Vespasien's being transmogrified into a wolf man,²⁴ Vespasien's desire for wealth, power and position has reduced his life to a narrow agenda: <<être adulé de tous et partout, à la maison comme à l'hôpital, et jouir d'un pouvoir sans partage>> (VH 46). Moreover, he eats <<avec une gloutonnerie animale>> (VH 51) and drinks excessively to such a degree that he loses all restraint (VH 80). When he is under the influence of alcohol, his eyes blaze and his voice grows hoarse, prefiguring <<Une humeur vengeresse>> (VH 80). An expression of his intention to harm people whom he does not like is the admiration he has for those dictators who happen to be featured on television: <<Hitler, Staline, Castro, Idi Amin Dada, Bokassa, Saddam Hussein>> (VH 79). His violent tendencies that grow out of a mania for authority come into play in the way he treats his wife Alba, the Old Man and his patients.

²¹ In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 14.

²² The other explanation of the transition from melancholia to mania is that it is "a matter of general economic experience" (1957, 254). This "is afforded by the observation that all states such as joy, exultation or triumph, which give us the normal model for mania, depend on the same economic conditions" (1957, 254), says Freud. See also Kristeva's discussion about mania as defences against suffering in *Soleil noir*, p. 197.

²³ Although this explanation "sounds plausible", Freud acknowledges that "it is too indefinite" and "gives rise to more new problems and doubts than we can answer" (1957, 255).

²⁴ See my discussion about the theme of evil in Kristeva's novels in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

Before proceeding to discuss Vespasien's aggressive behaviour towards others in *Le vieil homme et les loups*,²⁵ however, we should address the question of the idea of violence as correlative to mania in Kristeva's fictional representation of domestic problems. A counterpart of the story of Vespasien on this point is the story of the art dealer Michael Fish who mistreats his lover Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*. Domestic violence is part of the cause of Gloria's suffering, and Michael Fish's vicious nature is inseparable from the fact that he has a mania for money (P 152). <<[Un] homme d'affaires vulgaire qui avait joué à gagner et à perdre de l'argent dans des spéculations hasardeuses sans jamais se faire pincer pour escroquerie et en vivant largement au-dessus de ses moyens, comme il est de règle>> (P 44), Michael Fish was already a money maniac before he met Gloria. Becoming Gloria's lover allows him to make himself richer by turning himself into <<[un] marchand de tableaux>> who launches <<l'œuvre jusque-là secrète et peu appréciée de Stan Novak, le défunt mari de Gloria>> (P 44-45).

Yet selling the work of Stan Novak for profit does not satiate Michael Fish's desire for wealth. He, according to Gloria's maid-housekeeper Hester Bellini, wants everything from Gloria (P 152). Hence, disinheriting Gloria's son Jerry is his priority and when he has doubts about whether Gloria will abandon Jerry or not he resorts to violence. As Stéphanie Delacour tells us in her recount of the couple's domestic life,

Voilà combien de temps que Gloria Harrison et son amant en sont arrivés aux cris, peut-être même aux coups, oubliant que Pauline et Jerry travaillent juste au-dessus et que l'orthophoniste, sinon l'élève, entend tout? Dieu merci, Jerry n'a rien perçu, rien su, il n'a pas besoin de ça, certainement pas. Mais Pauline a bien écouté, elle, cet impossible Fish réclamer avec insistance quelque chose qu'elle ne comprend pas, des propos confus, Gloria refuser, lui, revenir à la charge, Gloria se défendre, lui, plus violent encore. Pauline devine qu'il s'agit bel et bien de déshériter Jerry (P 265).

The desire Fish has for disinheriting Jerry foreshadows his madness, which will drive him to strangle Gloria. As Hester testifies in the interview she has with the police about the murder of Gloria, <<- C'est [Fish] qui l'a étranglée, sinon je ne vois pas qui [...] Une brute, je vous dis, et ça se prétend un homme – un gentleman, par-dessus le marché>> (P 154). This accusation of murder Hester makes against Fish relates the correlation between mania and violence to the Kristevan theory of melancholia, since Fish's murderous tendencies, which are a product of the mania he has for wealth, suggest the death of his soul. The fact that he is devoid of love points to him as an automaton.

The black hole of Fish's melancholia as mania, in revealing itself in his madness, is an expression of melancholia as madness: both types of melancholia involve the speaking beings'

²⁵ Ibid.

inability to control emotions. Suffering from emotional instability, the speaking beings in both cases are victims of a violence that is also the cause of asymbolia. With regard to the relationship between domestic violence and asymbolia, Michael Fish and Gloria Harrison in *Possessions* express their condition through silence rather than through psychotic speech as Kristeva's other fictional melancholic-depressive couples do. Fish hardly speaks, and Gloria does not communicate with others about herself; the silence into which their asymbolia turns embodies the death of Fish's soul and Gloria's suffering. Although Fish is not suicidal, he is dead, and his blatant disregard for humanity is an illustration of this. Gloria is suicidal as a result of not being able to separate herself from the dead mother or the death-bearing woman: <<Elle soignait en permanence une invisible blessure. Pour être exact, le mot *soin* ne convenait pas, mais elle n'en trouvait pas d'autre>> (P 77).

The <<invisible blessure>> around which Gloria organises her subjectivity comes from <<cette sorte d'autre vie qui était celle de son fils>> (P 77) and is therefore associated with her failure to be a "good enough" mother. Her "bad" maternal behaviour,²⁶ as her son's speech therapist Pauline Gadeau sees it, is to do with her problematic relationship with her lover Michael Fish. In this sense, the question of motherhood is the root of the dead mother complex that is involved in domestic problems in the story of Gloria. The idea that Gloria's asymbolia is the embodiment of a failed mother-son relationship, coupled with Gloria's unsuccessful love life, echoes the discussion about the relationship between motherhood and melancholia. At this point the relationship between domestic violence and asymbolia in Kristeva's fictional representation of love stories is implicated in Kristeva's psychoanalytic study of female sexuality. For a woman's despondency over her lover(s), in Kristeva's understanding of motherhood and melancholia in *Soleil noir*, is responsible for her desire to have <<son enfant <pour elle-même>>> (1987, 100); and her possessiveness will have potential tragic consequences.

The choice of becoming a possessive mother a woman makes in response to the problem of unfulfilled love is, however, the other side of the coin for women in the same position who choose to be frigid. An example of the latter approach to domestic problems is the story of Kristeva's melancholic-depressive patient Marie-Ange in *Soleil noir* and that of her fictional character Carole Benedetti in *Les Samouraïs*. Both instances of dysfunctional sexuality are also complicated by the women's hatred of their mothers, whom they regard as neglectful.²⁷ Just as Marie-Ange <<retient de son enfance la certitude d'avoir été abandonnée par sa mère accaparée

²⁶ See note 11 in this chapter.

²⁷ See my discussion about the signification of Carole's rejection of motherhood in the fourth and fifth chapters of this thesis.

par de nombreuses grossesses successives>> (1987, 94), so Carole feels that <<n'importe quoi serait moins criminel que le crime de sa mère qui l'avait eue à froid, comme on ouvre un compte en banque>> (LS 123). The poisonous mother-daughter relationships then lead partially to their suffering from the dead mother complex. As automatons, they are also suicidal because of the effect their asymbolia has on them. Reflected in their suicidal tendencies is their desire to avenge themselves on their mothers. Thus, they can only detach themselves from the mothers through their own death. This expression of the dead mother complex points to the mother in real life as the desired/rejected other, of which Kristeva's fictional character Gloria Harrison in *Possessions* is the embodiment.

As suggested in the discussion about why Gloria has to die, she is the desired/rejected other for her killer Pauline Gadeau, since Pauline's hatred towards her is aroused by Pauline's desire to replace her. That desire is a desire for motherhood, which allows Pauline to reminisce about the affection she felt for her brother who died when she was an adolescent. Violence in this instance is correlative to the bereavement that causes Pauline's melancholia and depression. Consequently, the relationship between the concept of the dead mother complex and the theme of violence in Kristeva's novels has to be looked at in conjunction with the question of mourning.

Bereavement: Mourning for the Lost Object

A definition of mourning is that it "is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (1957, 243), says Freud in "Mourning and Melancholia". Although mourning, like melancholia, "involves grave departures from the normal attitude to life" (1957, 243), we, according to Freud, never regard it as a pathological condition and refer it to medical treatment. Rather, "we rely on its being overcome after a certain lapse of time, and we look upon any interference with it as useless or even harmful" (1957, 244). This Freudian concept of mourning, which points to that feeling as natural to the bereaved, is present in Kristeva's fictional representation of the story of Pauline Gadeau in *Possessions*. Yet Pauline's mourning for the loss of her brother is superficial in that it does not arrest her melancholia.

Speaking through the Frenchwoman Odile Allart, who is an old school-friend of Gloria's (P 41), in *Possessions*, the narrator Stéphanie Delacour tells us how Pauline's bereavement paralyzes Pauline: after learning of her brother's death, <<Pauline n'avait pas desserré les dents; elle ne parla pas davantage après l'enterrement; cela dura des mois>> (P 234). Her silence, like those psychotic speeches in Kristeva's fictional representation of melancholic-depressives, ends in suicide attempts (P 234), which is illustrative of her asymbolia. It is in her melancholia and

depression that her mourning for the loss of her brother reveals itself. The way in which she is a superficial mourner is embodied in the idea that she survives her grief and makes a new life for herself by changing languages: <<Elle s'est mise au santabarbarois et à l'orthophonie: sa façon à elle de renaître, de retrouver le contact avec l'enfance>> (P 235).²⁸ Her survival, according to Odile, attests the theory, proposed by <<le père Freud>>, that <<Un deuil, ça ne dure que deux ans>> (P 235). To that Odile adds <<mettons trois pour les cas désespérés>> to explain her condition (P 235). This interpretation of Pauline's success in getting over her brother's death is, however, untenable when Pauline murders Gloria under an attack of depression.

What is important in Odile's observations on Pauline's condition is the idea of language as a bridge between life and death in Pauline's battle against bereavement. That idea is reminiscent of Kristeva's study of <<l'importance axiale du langage chez l'être humain>> in *Soleil noir*, in which she introduces the concept of <<[une] solution non dépressive au dilemme mélancolique fuir-combattre: faire le mort (flight/fight: learned helplessness (sic))>> (1987, 48). By <<une solution de lutte ou de fuite dans la représentation psychique et dans le langage>> (1987, 48), she refers to the speaking being's ability to use signs to protect itself against inactivity or playing dead. In order for that solution to be worked out, the speaking being thus needs <<une solide implication dans le code symbolique et imaginaire; lequel, à cette condition seulement, devient stimulation et renforcement>> (1987, 48). As stimulation and reinforcement, language in its interaction with the speaking being is a cure for despair relating to melancholia and depression. Its implication in the question of mourning is the focus of the following discussion.

At issue in this discussion about the relationship between mourning and language in Kristeva's theorisation of bereavement is the presence of the Kristevan theory of melancholia in the post-colonial critic David Punter's *Postcolonial Imaginings: Fictions of a New World Order*. In that book, Punter's attempt "to collect together some images of postcolonial loss" (2000, 128) is comparable to Kristeva's interest in the essence of <<La Chose mélancolique>> for which the melancholic-depressives mourn in *Soleil noir* (1987, 23). This correlation between French feminist theory and post-colonial theory will provide a framework for an exploration into Kristeva's fictional representation of mourning.

To see how the relationship between Kristeva's discussion about melancholia and mourning and Punter's reading of post-colonial literature works in Kristeva's novels, we shall examine the search for moments of a sense of loss in that relationship. Briefly, that search likens

²⁸ Compare this point with my discussion about the relationship between body and language in "Textualising the Body *Feminine*" in the sixth chapter of this thesis.

storytellers of the postcolonial to melancholic-depressives and the bereaved, of whom what Punter calls “the literary” is a representation:

The literary, we may say, can be defined – among many other ways – as the major site on which that crucial question – ‘Do you remember?’ – is insistently asked. But this does not convert or reduce the literary into a ‘search for meaning’. Rather, the literary begins at that point where we realise that such a search for meaning is a rationalist illusion, a turning, a veering away from the realm of symbols and images in which power lies – both the power of enforcement and the power of resistance (2000, 131).

This means that the literary is the workings of symbols and images that do not cohere or make sense. It thus reflects how storytellers of the postcolonial master signs, but not affect. Through the literary, which, in Punter’s words, is “a temporary re-collection of that which has been scattered” in post-colonial history (2000, 128), storytellers of the postcolonial nevertheless experience a sense of loss. In other words, the postcolonial within the literary constitutes “a matter of the mutual connection with trauma, and thus inevitably with mourning and melancholy” (2000, 132). This interplay of a sense of loss and language captures the fleeing/fighting function of language in Kristeva’s theory of <<[une] solution non dépressive au dilemme mélancolique>> (1987, 48).

An example of language as a medium for retrieving a sense of loss is, for Punter, narratives of “personal trauma” (2000, 132). One of these narratives is Kristeva’s fictional representation of the story of Stéphanie Delacour in *Le vieil homme et les loups*. As shown by Stéphanie’s personal account of her mourning for her father’s death, prompted by the Old Man’s, her sense of loss emanates from her feelings that she kindles <<au ras des menus détails, insignifiance du rêve et insensé du crime>> (VH 150). The symbols and images of her perceptions of bereavement in turn enable her to compose a picture of her father and the Old Man’s life before they died:

Papa et le Vieil Homme avaient la simplicité d’être des hommes, n’importe lesquels, et pour cela même tels que, de toute façon, ils importent. Oui, dans la nuit des grands hommes, mon quolibet repart à la racine du <princípio individuationis>. Après tout, c’est lui qu’il faudrait sauver d’urgence dans une nouvelle arche de Noé, puisque c’est lui que Santa Barbara a commencé par abolir.²⁹ Lui, le quodlibet, le Vieil Homme, papa (VH 150).

The distinctiveness of her father and the Old Man’s ordinariness, which she considers as needing to be preserved, is an emblem of <<La Chose mélancolique>> that is an ersatz of an object in Kristeva’s formulation of melancholia in *Soleil noir* (1987, 23).

²⁹ I shall return to this point later in this section.

As Kristeva propounds in her study of mourning, there is no object for the melancholic-depressive, only a Thing as an ersatz of an object: the melancholic-depressive <<est en deuil non pas d'un Objet mais de la Chose>> (1987, 22).³⁰ Thus,

Depuis cet attachement archaïque, le dépressif a l'impression d'être déshérité d'un suprême bien innommable, de quelque chose d'irreprésentable, que seule peut-être une dévoration pourrait figurer, une *invocation* pourrait indiquer, mais qu'aucun mot ne saurait signifier (1987, 23).

Consumed with hopelessness and sadness, the melancholic-depressive <<fugue à la poursuite d'aventures et d'amours toujours décevantes, ou bien s'enferme, inconsolable et aphasique, en tête à tête avec la Chose innommée>> (1987, 23). The mutual connection between the melancholic-depressive and the Thing is that which has been retranslated into Kristeva's representation of her fictional character Stéphanie Delacour's mourning for the principle of individuation in *Le vieil homme et les loups*. The fact that the principle of individuation is a substitute for Stéphanie's late father and the late professor further dissolves the boundary between the unrepresentable and the representable, since the ideal is personified.

By making the unrepresentable representable, Stéphanie's mourning for the principle of individuation brings back the images of the objects of her desire, namely her late father and the Old Man: <<Papa [...] s'attardait avec le Professeur dans les ruines romaines et les vieilles églises du premier siècle, à moins qu'elles n'aient été du troisième ou du quatrième>> (VH 157). This return of the images of the objects of her desire, which becomes the objects of her desire again because the objects of her desire have become impossible objects, ushers in the question of the relationship between mourning and desire. At this point, Kristeva's fictional representation of bereavement can be related to Lacan's discussion about "the connection between mourning and the constitution of the object in desire" in the article "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*" in *Yale French Studies*.

³⁰ In summarising the meaning of <<la Chose>>, Kristeva says, <<Ayant constaté que, dès l'aube de la philosophie grecque, la saisie de la *chose* est solidaire de l'énoncé d'une *proposition* et de sa *vérité*, Heidegger ouvre cependant la question du caractère <historial> de la *chose*: <la question en direction de la chose se remet en mouvement (sic) du fond de son début> (*Qu'est-ce qu'une chose?*, trad. franç. Gallimard, Paris, 1965, p. 57). Sans faire l'histoire du commencement de cette pensée de la chose mais en l'ouvrant dans l'entre-deux qui se joue entre l'homme et la chose, Heidegger note, en traversant Kant: <Cet intervalle/homme-chose/en tant que présaisie étend sa prise par-delà la chose en même temps que dans un mouvement de rebours il a prise derrière nous.>

Dans la brèche ouverte par la question de Heidegger mais à la suite de l'ébranlement freudien des certitudes rationnelles, nous parlerons de *Chose* en y entendant le <quelque chose> qui, vu à rebours par le sujet déjà constitué, apparaît comme l'indéterminé, l'inséparable, l'insaisissable, jusque dans sa détermination de chose sexuelle même. Nous réservons ce terme d'*Objet* à la constance spatio-temporelle que vérifie une proposition énoncée par un sujet maître de son dire>> (1987, 22).

Here Lacan suggests, “The very structure at the basis of desire always lends a note of impossibility to the object of human desire” (1977, 37). In this way, the bereaved who “descends into the maelstrom of sorrow” finds itself in a certain relationship to the lost object that is the object of its desire (1977, 38). That relationship then puts the bereaved in a hole that “provides the place for the projection of the missing signifier, [a hole] which is essential to the structure of the Other” (1977, 39). For it is in that hole that the missing signifier finds its place. Yet, as Lacan goes on to explain, “at the same time [the missing signifier] cannot find [that hole], for it can be articulated only at the level of the Other. It is at this point that [...] swarms of images, from which the phenomena of mourning arise, assume the place of the phallus” (1977, 39).

By “the phenomena of mourning”, Lacan refers not only to “the phenomena in which each individual instance of madness manifests itself” but also to “those which attest to one or another of the most remarkable collective madness of the community of men” (1977, 39). Thus, the ghost that represents a form of “collective madness of the community of men” is one of those images assuming “the place of the phallus” (1977, 39). This aspect of his study of the relationship between desire and mourning is also present in Kristeva’s novels in the description of (the images of) the spirits who haunt the psychoanalyst Joëlle Cabarus in *Les Samouraïs*. One of (these images of) the spirits Joëlle encounters happens to be Lacan himself, whose name in the novel is Maurice Lauzun (LS 87):

[...] Lauzun. Sacré vieux clown! J’avais beau me moquer de ses pitreries – j’ai évité le ridicule (qu’il méprisait) de me constituer en disciple –, il me tient toujours. Un peu. Fort. Peut-être parce qu’il est mort lentement. Parce qu’il a mis en scène d’abord la mort de sa parole. Qu’il s’est ébloui avant de s’éteindre. Il m’oblige à penser que la mort est omniprésente, que la mort vit à notre place de vivants et qu’elle décide parfois de ne plus se dissimuler, mais de surplomber la vie que nous croyions séparée d’elle. Comme en ce moment où elle emporte tant de gens que, même moi, je suis contrainte de penser à ma mort. Pourtant, je sais qu’adolescente j’ai eu l’illumination bizarre d’être incapable de foi religieuse, n’ayant pas peur de mourir (LS 381-382).

Conveyed here in Joëlle’s conversion from a non-believer to a believer in the existence of death in life is the incorporation of the lost object (i.e. Lauzun) in the hole that results from Joëlle’s loss and that calls forth mourning in Joëlle. Her experience of the death of another thus can be compared with Stéphanie Delacour’s in *Le vieil homme et les loups*.

Like Joëlle, Stéphanie confronts the impossibility from which (the images of) the objects of her desire issue forth (VH 157). Her mourning (for the lost objects) then allows her to re-treasure the principle of individuation, without which civilisation cannot survive. As illustrated by her meditations on the question of what her memories of the Old Man amount to,

Des initiales qui se fondent dans la mémoire de papa. Comme un rêve, la mort mélange les spectres des deux complices. Où finit l'un? où commence l'autre? Il était une fois l'homme contre les loups ...

S. Clarus révérait Rome pour critiquer insidieusement notre monde, alors que papa faisait de la pédagogie sans préceptes positifs, se contentant de mettre en évidence ce qui lui semblait abject. Je ne sais qui des deux était le plus désabusé (VH 161).

Her interpretation of her late father and Septicius Clarus's (i.e. the Old Man or the Professor's) disillusionment with society is the point at which the principle of individuation becomes the signifier of the impossibility that she confronts, since it prompts her to associate the objects of her desire with an ideal. The relationship between herself and the objects of her desire, in dividing her late father and the late professor, who were men of high moral standards, from the inhabitants of their society or Santa Barbara (VH 150),³¹ also brings up the question of community in the work of mourning. In other words, what is the role of the inhabitants of Santa Barbara in the hole that holds Stéphanie's relationship with the objects of her desire? Conceivably, they occupy the place of the opposite of civilisation, which helps Stéphanie's identification with the objects of her desire. This boundary between evil and good in the hole relates the presence of Lacan's theorisation of mourning and desire in Kristeva's novels to Punter's discussion of the "empty space" in his analysis of the postcolonial and its relation to mourning and melancholy in *Postcolonial Imaginings* (2000, 134).

By "empty space", Punter refers to the gap "between the naming that signifies 'you' from the outside world and the naming that signifies 'I' in the interior self" (2000, 134). This gap is reflected in an individual's identity, which is constituted through its identification with "the naming that signifies 'I' in the interior self", an identification which is made possible by the individual's relationship with "the naming that signifies 'you' [i.e. the Other in the same society as the individual] from the outside world" (2000, 134). The bifurcation of the naming, according to Punter, is which the symptom of the postcolonial condition inheres in and "we might consider [that symptom] to be the after-effect, the aftermath, of the 'founding accident', the continuing legacy of a specific *méconnaissance*" (2000, 134). This means that

it should [...] be obvious in any context (but equally obviously has not been, and continues not to be, in the colonial and neo-colonial mind) that if [the aforementioned] two possibilities of identification are forced too far apart, if they are driven 'from home', rendered foreign by a whole sociocultural apparatus whose very purpose and *raison d'être* is indeed to drive them apart, then we are no longer in a world where the simple panaceas of cause and effect, cohesion and closure, can have very much impact. We are in a world instead where a profound melancholy may be the only response to a set of disabling impositions (2000, 134).

³¹ See also my discussion about Stéphanie's late father and the Old Man as the embodiment of the abject in the next chapter.

The function of an imaginary line of demarcation between identification with “‘you’ from the outside world” and with “‘I’ in the interior self” in the “empty space” which is reflected in an individual’s identity is thus to maintain the workings of a world in order: “cause and effect, cohesion and closure” (2000, 134). Through the connection between the two possibilities of identification, melancholia does not get started in the world where we live. This idea is, however, itself a reworking of the Kristevan theory of mourning. The work of Kristeva, which Punter applies to his reading of the postcolonial condition here, is *Étrangers à nous-mêmes*. In that book on the notion of the “stranger” – the foreigner, outsider, or alien in a country and society not their own – and the notion of strangeness within the self – a person’s deep sense of being, Kristeva suggests that a foreigner’s mourning for the Thing is mourning for <<un mirage du passé qu’il ne saura jamais retrouver. Il le sait d’un savoir désolé qui retourne sa rage à l’égard des autres (car il y a toujours une autre, une méchante cause de mon exil) contre lui-même [...]>> (1988, 20). This study of the relationship between mourning and melancholia in a foreigner’s case, which is related to Punter’s concept of the bifurcation of naming, is also embodied in Kristeva’s fictional representation of bereavement in the story of Stéphanie Delacour in *Le vieil homme et les loups*.

The implication that Stéphanie is a foreigner calls for an analysis of her residence status in the community where the objects of her desire lived. In describing her visit to Santa Barbara, where she was raised at the time when her father was an ambassador there, Stéphanie says, <<j’ai trouvé le lieu hanté. Je ne saurais vous dire quels indices m’ont conduite à cette certitude>> (VH 72). The answer to her question of what causes the uncertainty about the impression she has of Santa Barbara is a sense of *déjà vu*:

D’ailleurs, vous avez peut-être vous-même conçu ce genre de soupçons en débarquant à la gare ou à l’aéroport d’une cité qui vous est inconnue et néanmoins évoque d’emblée des machinations surnoises, intimes, mais oubliées, impensables, absurdes, qui là s’incarnent avec une épaisseur troublante (VH 72-73).

By inviting you, the reader, to experience the evil in which the city of Santa Barbara is shrouded, Stéphanie excludes the inhabitants of Santa Barbara from the group that consists of herself, her late father and the late professor. With this trinity, <<[la] apesanteur par-delà le malaise>> is the source of life (VH 169), which makes them alien to the world around them: <<[il] nous faisait rêver, divaguer, toujours seuls et pourtant accordés. Sans maman, on aurait risqué de délirer, le Professeur, papa et moi>> (VH 169-170). Their weightlessness, as Stéphanie goes on to tell us, consists in <<la forme très logique d’un infini des langues>> (VH 170), through which they are saved from what Stéphanie’s diplomat father calls <<l’enfer>> (VH 171). The comparison of Santa Barbara to hell then emphasises the purity of Stéphanie, her late father and the late

professor's world, a duality which can be considered "the after-effect, the aftermath, of the 'founding accident'" of good and evil. Moreover, the implication that language is a solution to maladies of the soul³² from which the inhabitants of Santa Barbara suffer brings us back to the question of the relationship between language and mourning.

Like melancholic-depressives and the bereaved, the inhabitants of Santa Barbara need <<[une] solution non dépressive au dilemme mélancolique>> (1987, 48). The cause of their melancholia and depression as the death of their souls further likens them to the protagonists who are assailants and who suffer from the dead mother complex in Kristeva's novels. Violence as a way of expressing <<la maladie de la douleur>> (1987, 264) is thus the main element of the inhabitants of Santa Barbara's suffering, which Stéphanie Delacour's recollection of the Old Man's description of life in Santa Barbara capture:

<On ne peut pas tout dire, on ne peut pas tout faire, disait encore le Professeur. Mais les gens de Santa Barbara croient que tout est possible: les autoroutes, les barrages, les bébés-éprouvettes, les fausses factures, les magasins vides, les magasins dévalisés, les meurtres, les amnisties. Ils sont devenus des bêtes, ils sont allés plus loin que les loups qui les ont envahis, ils sont possédés par une soif d'impossible> (VH 101).

The mania the inhabitants of Santa Barbara have for the impossible is responsible for their violence, with the result that they become the embodiment of <<Des noyaux durs, des atomes insécables qui ne retrouvent leurs forces qu'en explosant les uns contre les autres. Chacun est devenu un Hiroshima potentiel – voire de plus en plus actuel, d'ailleurs>> (VH 100). The destructiveness of their power then worries the Old Man, who, for that reason, sees the contemporary world as <<une guerre totale, la guerre de tous contre tous. Sans frontières, sans 'bien' ni 'mal' (misérables raffinements!), sous la poussée des moi-moi>> (VH 101). This interpretation of post-modernity points to hatred as the essence of violence whose source is in the dead mother complex.³³ The hatred between the inhabitants of Santa Barbara, in which the boundary between good and evil is erased, further brings up the question of identity that is the object of analysis in the next chapter.

³² Compare this point with my discussion about the theme of evil in Kristeva's novels in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

³³ See my discussion about violence as an important feature of Kristeva's fictional representation of the hopelessness of contemporary world in this chapter, pp. 68-72.

III ABJECTION

On a le choix entre les monstres actifs ou les monstrueux d'insignifiance.
Julia Kristeva, *Le vieil homme et les loups*

In her observations on the metamorphosis the army surgeon Vespasien undergoes from a man with a soul to a wolf man in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, the narrator Stéphanie Delacour explains how suffering from maladies of the soul leads to the breakdown of a speaking being's identity:

Étrangement, à la charnière de deux époques, les gens perdent leurs contours et leur contenu. Sans dedans ni dehors, ils se répandent en actes incoercibles et explosent; ou, au contraire, ils se rétrécissent, minerais impénétrables, de sens nul. On a le choix entre les monstres actifs ou les monstrueux d'insignifiance (VH 57).

Neither alive nor dead but in between, people who suffer from maladies of the soul are borderline creatures.¹ As borderline creatures, they, in Kristeva's terminology, are beset by <<abjection>> (1980, 9), a term which Kristeva uses to address the search for identity in psychoanalysis in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: Essai sur l'abjection*. In other words, the borderline creatures in *Le vieil homme et les loups* are a fictionalisation of what Kristeva calls <<l'abject>> in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*. As she puts it, <<L'abject n'est pas un ob-jet en face de moi, que je nomme ou que j'imagine. Il n'est pas non plus cet ob-jet, petit <a> fuyant indéfiniment dans la quête systématique du désir>> (1980, 9).

The opening of this chapter is an examination of the workings of the Kristevan concept of the abject in her representation of the borderline creatures in her novels. At issue in this attempt to relate Kristeva's psychoanalytical theory of identity to her representation of it in her novels is an exploration into the relationship between the theme of en-counterling the abject² and the focus of part one of this thesis: "French Feminist Theory or Post-colonial (Feminist) Theory?" The book on which that exploration shall focus is David Punter's *Postcolonial Imaginings: Fictions of a New World Order*, for, as I shall demonstrate, there are parallels between Punter's discussion about monsters as borderline creatures and Kristeva's concept of the abject. Through an analysis of Kristeva's fictional representation of the abject in the context of the relationship between French feminist theory and post-colonial (feminist) theory, an answer to the question of what the function of abjection is in the formation of individual and national identity can be formulated. Involved in that question, which is the ultimate aim of this chapter, is the issue of the meaning of abjection in Kristeva's theorisation of identity in psychoanalysis in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur* and

¹ See my discussion about the Kristevan concept of borderline creatures in this chapter, pp. 82-83.

² I use the word "en-counterling" to suggest that the act of encountering the abject involves countering it.

Étrangers à nous-mêmes. This is the focus of the second section of this chapter, which will follow an analysis of Kristeva's fictional representation of borderline creatures.

En-countering Monsters

In Kristeva's novels to date, the army surgeon Vespasien in *Le vieil homme et les loups* is representative of her idea of borderline creatures. As I have discussed in the introduction to this chapter, suffering from maladies of the soul leaves Vespasien living the life of either one of <<les monstres actifs ou les monstrueux d'insignifiance>> (VH 57). When he indulges in <<actes incoercibles>> and explodes (VH 57), his cruelty, as Stéphanie Delacour tells us from the perspective of the Old Man, brings out the bestiality in him:

Le Vieil Homme était persuadé que ce Vespasien-là n'avait pas besoin d'Alba pour déborder de ce genre d'idées: dominer et s'entre-tuer en faisant semblant de s'intéresser aux images, aux B.D., aux films, à la télévision, les yeux toujours parallèles à ceux des autres. Car à Santa Barbara les gens ne rencontrent les regards de leurs proches que dans un écran qui remplace l'infini de l'ancienne géométrie ... Un homme dur, ce Vespasien, un vrai Lycaon (VH 65).

In comparing Vespasien to the character Lycaon, an enemy of Jupiter, in Ovid's *The Metamorphoses*, Stéphanie's reading of the Old Man's observations on the spread of violence in Santa Barbara points to Vespasien and therefore the inhabitants of Santa Barbara as savage wolves. For, in *The Metamorphoses*, Lycaon is changed into a wolf by Jupiter as a punishment for ordering the body of a hostage of his to be dressed and served up at a feast. He does that in order to discover if it is Jupiter who has come to lodge in his palace.³ Upon becoming a wolf, his animal nature, which preserves the ferociousness that was characteristic of his human nature, embodies the complexities of the relationship between monstrosity and power.

The fact that the mythical wolf man Lycaon is the original of the monstrous army surgeon Vespasien in Kristeva's portrayal of borderline creatures in *Le vieil homme et les loups* relates the image of monsters in Kristeva's novel(s) to the question of power and powerlessness. In other words, the bestiality in Vespasien, as well as in the inhabitants of Santa Barbara, repeats the brute force of Lycaon, which grows out of powerlessness, since the monsters in both cases are unable to save themselves from indulging in violence. In giving in to their desire for slaughter as the source of their monstrousness, they can be compared to the patients who are affected by what Kristeva calls <<l'échec hystérique de la vie psychique>> in *Les nouvelles maladies de l'âme* (1993, 15). This means that they, like people who contract maladies of the soul, are left <<Sans

³ For a detailed account of the story of Lycaon and Jupiter, see Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, pp. 16-17. See also my discussion about the theme of evil in Kristeva's novels in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

identité sexuelle, subjective ou morale>> (1993, 16). As a result of not having this identity, they become the embodiment of an <<amphibien>> that, in Kristeva's words, <<est un être de frontière>> (1993, 16) and their bodies convey the presence of the Kristevan concept of the abject. At this point the workings of the abject in the formlessness of their identity corresponds to the interaction between powerlessness and power in the process of their turning into monsters; an idea which leads into the problem of separation and identification in individuals.

In terms of the wolf man Vespasien and the inhabitants of Santa Barbara's identification with the evil in themselves in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, their separation from their original forms also pits them against the Old Man who embodies humanity. As the opposite of the embodiment of qualities and rights that people should have, they would conventionally be considered the outsiders in society. Yet in Kristeva's portrayal of the relationship between good and evil, they are representative of a society that is shrouded in evil, which places the Old Man in the position of being the outsider in his society. Thus, the Old Man's fears about "the ominous reality and magnitude of the descending wolves", says Danuta Jarecka in her review of the novel, are dismissed as nonsense.⁴ At the same time, as Jarecka goes on to explain, the stealthy invasion of the mysterious wolves into Santa Barbara turns the town into "a dreamscape in which 'men [become] wolves [towards] men'".⁵

Through the inhabitants of Santa Barbara, the wolves then install themselves at the very centre, the very heart, of the city of Santa Barbara. As Stéphanie Delacour has pointed out in her reminiscences about the Old Man's experience of coming upon traces left behind by the wolves, <<Aucun doute: les hordes sauvages étaient là, dissimulées mais présentes. Elles s'emparaient des villages et des villes, elles s'infiltraient sous la peau des gens, le monde entier devenait de plus en plus canin, féroce et barbare>> (VH 10). The fact that the invasion of the wolves dehumanises the inhabitants of Santa Barbara is reflected in daily life in that city: <<les gens se disputaient dans les métros et les autobus, onomatopées, visages farouches; les files d'attente s'allongeaient devant les magasins où des fauves affamés s'échangeaient des insultes>> (VH 87). The dissolution of the boundary between men and wolves in the formation of the inhabitants of Santa Barbara's new identity results in monsters possessed by what Anna Smith calls "the impulse in society to savage the outsider who is different".⁶

The idea that monsters, rather than men, dominate the social and the cultural processes

⁴ See the jacket illustration of English translation of *Le vieil homme et les loups: The Old Man and the Wolves*.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ See Smith's analysis of Kristeva's perceptions of the operations of power in post-modern world in *Julia Kristeva: Readings of Exile and Estrangement*, p. 191.

ushers in David Punter's discussion about the connection between "the process of making monsters" and "the exercise of power in society" in *Post-colonial Imaginings* (2000, 110). Here Punter, like Kristeva, who regards monsters as a representation of the way power operates in a particular culture, refers to monsters as a medium for understanding the workings of power in society. "For power", he writes, "very obviously, is all about the ability to include and to exclude", a source which allows human beings "to decide who belongs and who does not belong to the social, the cultural, the national order" (2000, 111). The interaction of power and monsters thus complicates the fixed ideas about monsters as outsiders in society. As Punter puts it,

[to say that monsters represent total exclusion] would be too simple an analysis, too inarticulate a possibility. Rather, we might say they represent those genuinely 'hybrid' forms that stand, as it were, at the boundary of what is and what is not acceptable, what is to be allowed to come to the warm hearth of society and what is to be consigned to the outer wilderness (2000, 111).

In suggesting that monsters are borderline creatures, he questions not only the ideology of identity but also that of the dichotomy between good and evil. The unacceptable, in his interpretation of what monsters represent, is not as evil as it is in ethical discourse. At the same time, it is not what is acceptable in the sense of that which embodies good.

His conceptualisation of monsters as a representation of "hybrid" forms is reminiscent of what Kristeva seeks to express in her portrayal of the inhabitants of Santa Barbara in *Le vieil homme et les loups*. As we can see in the scene in which Kristeva describes the hatred between the inhabitants of Santa Barbara, everyone is fighting everyone else; this is indicative of the fact that they have <<perdu le lien>>, <<le sens du lien. Ce qui est une tautologie, car une signification est toujours une liaison>> (VH 101). Without that connection which provides them with the meaning of existence, the world in which they dwell is <<une guerre totale>>, a war which is motivated by the ego, <<Sans frontières, sans 'bien' ni 'mal'>> (VH 101). The chaos of their lives represents the end of the boundary between civilisation and barbarism – a result of their encounter with the wolves. Yet, what are the wolves? They are portrayed by Kristeva as <<du Grand Nord et des steppes>>, and are <<affamés, implacables>> (VH 13). They recall, as Kristeva herself tells us in an interview with Bernard Sichère on *Le vieil homme et les loups*, <<l'invasion des armées rouges, l'installation du totalitarisme>> in Eastern Europe.⁷ <<Plus sournement>>, she goes on to explain,

les loups sont contagieux, ils contaminent les gens de sorte qu'on ne distingue plus de visages humains – à cet égard, ils symbolisent la barbarie, la criminalité de chacun. Ils signifient enfin l'invasion de la banalité qui efface tout critère de valeur dans le

⁷ Kristeva, <<*Roman noir et temps présent*>>, *L'Infini* 37 (1992), p. 76.

gangstérisme, la corruption, les <affaires>.⁸

Invaded by the wolves that embody <<la barbarie, la criminalité de chacun>>, the inhabitants of Santa Barbara thus let evil into the heart of goodness. The incorporation of evil into good in the formation of their identity is that which contributes to the erasure of <<tout critère de valeur>> in their society.

Since the wolves that inhabit the community of Santa Barbara are identical to the Red Armies, the destruction they cause to the civilisations of Santa Barbara is further related to the concept of imperialism and colonialism.⁹ Although the act of invasion in this instance is not tied to the fact that imperialism and colonialism arise from the desire to civilise the so-called barbarians, it evokes colonial mentality. The implications of the barbarians as the colonialists themselves in turn problematise the relationship between the colonisers and the colonised. Not victims of violence but invaders who colonise the city of Santa Barbara, the so-called barbarians in Kristeva's redefinition of colonial discourse¹⁰ subvert the image of themselves as the oppressed. On the other hand, their savage nature is strengthened in the act of invasion, an act which is associated with the imperialists, colonialists. This debunks the myth of a civilising mission¹¹ that rationalises the colonialists' violence against the barbarians but reinforces that of the inseparability between barbarism and monstrosity.

In questioning the ideology of the civilising mission, Kristeva's fictional representation of the act of invasion takes us back to my discussion about the work of the feminist post-colonial theorist and critic Anne McClintock on the violence of imperialism, colonialism and post-colonialism in the introduction to part one of this thesis. Here the colonialists are themselves barbarians, a race which awaits a civilising mission from the colonialists according to colonial discourse. The erasure of the boundary between civilisation and barbarism then poses a threat to the imperialists', colonialists' identity and therefore to the barbarians'. This crisis in the colonialists' and the barbarians' identity is embodied in the borderline creatures in Kristeva's novels: invaded by the wolves that are identical to the Red Armies, they are the victims of the colonialists who are barbarians themselves. The barbarism of the act of invasion is what is reflected in the process of their becoming monsters that are half-wolves and half-men, which leads into the question of the association of barbarism with monstrosity.

By pointing out the problem of attributing monstrosity to the so-called barbarians,

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ See my discussion in the introduction to part one of this thesis: "French Feminist Theory or Post-colonial (Feminist) Theory?" p. 21.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 22.

Kristeva brings up the question of xenophobia, which is the focus of her fictional representation of the tension between the outsider, or foreigner who lives in Santa Barbara and the inhabitants of Santa Barbara themselves. Here the outsider who lives in Santa Barbara is represented by the Old Man in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, and by Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*. Both characters are not assimilated into the city of Santa Barbara, in which the inhabitants suffer from maladies of the soul. As a result, they become victims of the violence that is a reflection of the inhabitants of Santa Barbara's suffering. Yet, unlike the Old Man, whose encounter with the monsters involves countering the invasion the wolves make upon Santa Barbara, Gloria submits herself to the savage force in her society. This difference in en-countering the monsters suggests the deterioration of what Kristeva calls <<un fait de société>>, <<une crise de civilisation>>¹² that resides in contemporary culture. The phenomenon of losing interest in psychic life, according to Kristeva, can be found in both the former Communist countries of Europe and the West. People who live in those societies no longer respect each other and sink into moral and spiritual decay, which is reflected in their violence against those who are different from them. The Old Man in *Le vieil homme et les loups* is considered an outsider in his society because of his refusal to become one of the monsters, whereas his counterpart, Gloria Harrison, in *Possessions* is a foreigner who lives in Santa Barbara. The dislike of Gloria the inhabitants of Santa Barbara manifest encapsulates the theme of the question of xenophobia in Kristeva's redefinition of colonial discourse, which I shall pursue here.

What is it about Gloria which brings out the inhabitants' sense of hostility? The fact that she is a foreigner living in Santa Barbara is only part of the reason. As the narrator Stéphanie Delacour tells us in her reflections on <<le gâchis qu'avait été l'existence de Gloria>> (P 23), celebrity also differentiates Gloria from the inhabitants of Santa Barbara:

Je la savais haïe, étrangère et presque écrivain, héroïne de quelques succès publics – elle avait excellé dans la traduction de Faulkner en santabarbarois, avant de se consoler comme traductrice attitrée de Philippe Roth. Une vie visible, en somme, de celles qui n'attirent pas une sympathie excessive à Santa Barbara – pas plus qu'ailleurs, soit dit en passant. Les médisances, les perfidies et les potins n'étaient pas pour me surprendre, et je savais qu'elle-même ne s'en étonnait plus depuis longtemps (P 23).

Knowledge as the root of Gloria's fame, which leads to the tension between Gloria and the inhabitants of Santa Barbara, points to the fear of the power of civilisation as the essence of xenophobia in Kristeva's redefinition of colonial discourse. This hostility to knowledge, which is a legacy of the invasion of the wolves, will, in Kristeva's representation of xenophobia, drive the inhabitants of Santa Barbara to violent crime.

¹² Kristeva, <<Roman noir et temps présent>>, *L'Infini* 37 (1992), p. 78.

As Stéphanie Delacour goes on to suggest in her analysis of what may ensue from the inhabitants of Santa Barbara's hatred towards Gloria, the murder of Gloria is to be expected:

J'aurais même été jusqu'à admettre, contre l'humanité qu'on prête à tort aux humains, aux femmes et parfois aux journalistes, que le poignard qu'on lui avait planté en pleine poitrine avant de lui trancher la tête ne me paraissait ni extravagant, ni vraiment déplacé. L'acte, commis avec une arme blanche à la lame et à la pointe aiguisées, comme ne manquerait pas de l'établir le médecin légiste, pouvait être en effet la conséquence logique d'un de ces rejets que Gloria suscitait invariablement et qu'en l'occurrence elle avait dû déclencher dans un cerveau survolté (P 23).

In reality the perpetrator of the crime is not one of the inhabitants of Santa Barbara but the speech therapist Pauline Gadeau who, like Gloria, is a cultivated foreigner living in Santa Barbara. Yet the fact remains that Pauline is a melancholic-depressive who has emotional and mental problems.¹³ In this sense, she can be said to be the double of the inhabitants of Santa Barbara, whose violence grows out of their suffering. This indicates a reciprocal relationship between the identities of the inhabitants of Santa Barbara and Pauline, which brings us back to the discussion about the Kristevan concept of borderline creatures.

The way in which Pauline becomes a wolf in the form of a human being transcends the fact that she is a cultivated foreigner living in Santa Barbara, a fact which isolates her from the inhabitants of Santa Barbara. Her encounter with the monsters thus poses a problem for the idea of xenophobia as an expression of the inhabitants of Santa Barbara's resistance to the power of civilisation in Kristeva's redefinition of colonial discourse. The incorporation of the barbarism of the inhabitants of Santa Barbara into the power of civilisation that characterises Pauline's human nature then makes Pauline a stranger to herself.¹⁴ As she remarks in the scene in which she is decapitating Gloria, she herself <<[morte]>> (P 272), and her other self that has a soul separates from this dead part.¹⁵ Her <<faux-self>>,¹⁶ like the wolf man Vespasien in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, does not have <<[une] identité sexuelle, subjective ou morale>> (1993, 16) and this is evidence of a body devoured by the abject. The image of her as <<un être de frontière>> emphasises the hopelessness of post-modern world, since it embodies the narcissism of the post-modern who, according to Kristeva, are losing their souls but who do not know it (1993, 16). This is coupled with the image of Gloria's lover, Michael Fish, who is a criminal suffering from maladies of the soul.

Compared with Pauline, Michael Fish is an instinctive criminal. Hence, rather than becoming a monster through encountering the wolves, he is a monster in himself. His barbarism

¹³ See my discussion about Pauline as an automaton in the previous chapter, pp. 57-58.

¹⁴ I shall return to the idea of the borderline creatures as strangers to themselves in the next section, p. 91.

¹⁵ Compare this point with my discussion about Pauline as an automaton in the previous chapter, pp. 57-58.

¹⁶ See my discussion about Pauline as a <<faux-self>> in the sixth chapter of this thesis.

peaks at the invasion of the wolves, namely of the Red Armies, who provide him with a corrupt political, social and cultural milieu. Contaminated by the brutalities of the wolves, his violent nature finds its expression in murder. Through strangling his lover, Gloria Harrison,¹⁷ he not only makes the influence the wolves have on him clear but also externalises his suffering in its relation to the dark side of civilisation. This likens him to the wolf man Vespasien in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, since the latter is suspected of the murder of a woman who is the double of his wife and who embodies the social and cultural collapse in the city of Santa Barbara.¹⁸ The similarities in the way in which the story of Vespasien parallels that of Michael Fish, on the other hand, are reinforced by the analogies between the murders of the double of Vespasien's wife Alba Ram and Michael Fish's lover Gloria Harrison. What follows addresses the signification of the corpses in the encounter between civilisation and barbarism.

Unambiguously, the body of a drowned woman in *Le vieil homme et les loups* and Gloria Harrison's corpse in *Possessions* bear witness to the fall of civilisation. As a mirror of the social and cultural situation in the city of Santa Barbara, they also represent foreigners' vulnerability to the societies in which the unidentified woman and Gloria live. For the original of the unidentified woman, Alba Ram, is a parasite, from a foreign country; her husband Vespasien remarks: <<C'est moi qui te nourris, si tu veux bien le noter, qui te sers d'alibi, de couverture. Pour une étrangère, c'est énorme, tu ne trouves pas?>> (VH 47), and Gloria is an unapproachable foreigner, a celebrity to the inhabitants of Santa Barbara (P 23). Not received into the societies in which they live, they further become the victims of the brutalities of people to whom they are related. Their murders, albeit that Alba's death is symbolical, are the product of their failure in countering the invasion of the wolves into Santa Barbara. This is foreshadowed by Alba's meditations on the fate of foreigners in *Le vieil homme et les loups* and by the inhabitants of Santa Barbara's comment on their relationship with Gloria in *Possessions*.

Lamenting the death of her cat – <<le compagnon qu'elle avait amené de sa province natale, son trésor, son bébé>> (VH 12) – for which the inhabitants of Santa Barbara are responsible, Alba thinks to herself, <<Il y a des gens cruels, voilà tout. Personne n'aime les étrangers, encore moins les étrangères, alors on se venge sur ce qu'ils (ou elles) ont de plus cher>> (VH 12). The hatred the inhabitants of Santa Barbara hold for her, a foreigner, actualises in the body of her double, and the tension between the inhabitants of Santa Barbara and Gloria in *Possessions* has close parallels with this actualised hatred. As Stéphanie Delacour points out in her analysis of the role of the inhabitants of Santa Barbara in the murder of Gloria, they are

¹⁷ See my discussion about Gloria's murder in the previous chapter, pp. 71-72.

¹⁸ See my discussion about the relationship between body and city in the sixth chapter of this thesis.

antagonistic towards Gloria and therefore capable of becoming Gloria's murderers:

<Elle n'est pas des nôtres, elle n'en est pas>, se disaient les gens pour finir. Pour les Santa Barbarois qui se définissaient, comme tout un chacun, par le besoin d'<en être>, cette duplicité qu'ils croyaient débusquer chez Gloria devait être insupportable. Dérangeante, sans protection aucune, la traductrice représentait un mirage excitant mais de pouvoir nul – la proie toute désignée (P 277).

The possibility of Gloria being a victim of mistreatment in the society in which she lives leads Stéphanie to ask <<Un destin normal pour l'étrangère?>> (P 277) The answer to that question, according to Stéphanie, is positive in the sense that Gloria is a cultivated person:

Une traductrice [i.e. Gloria] qui, par définition, s'entraîne à aimer, avait dû être plutôt incapable de haïr. C'était là son défaut, j'imagine, j'en suis sûre: une tare irrémédiable, rare, un démon en négatif que cette absence de haine qui vous livre sans protection à tous les autres (P 277).

Love as the cause of Gloria's unsuccessful defence against the inhabitants of Santa Barbara attests to the power of civilisation, without which Gloria could confront the community in Santa Barbara. Conversely, it is the power of civilisation that excludes her from the community in Santa Barbara. This implies the need for the inhabitants of Santa Barbara to oppose the power of civilisation, a need which is related to the idea of xenophobia in Kristeva's redefinition of colonial discourse.

Given that, the inhabitants of Santa Barbara's hatred towards the foreigners who are a threat to the forces of barbarism embraces the fact that they are intolerant of those residents who are reluctant to be assimilated into their society. The representative of those residents is the Old Man in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, who has attempted to save the inhabitants of Santa Barbara and himself from turning into monsters. Yet his encounter with the wolves, which involves countering them, ends in his death that, in his own view, is a continuum of <<cette existence artificielle qu'il s'était forgée depuis l'enfance en apprenant à parler, lire, écrire, jusqu'à se confondre avec une langue morte>> (VH 116). Thus, when his time comes, he cries: <<<Oh, laissez! Il ne profite à personne d'irriter un cœur saignant. Donnez-moi en grâce de parcourir calme ce sentier où je vais ...>>> (VH 125). Although he is not afraid of death, he considers it <<ennuyeux d'en finir ainsi, cerné par les loups>> (VH 125). On the other hand, his death satisfies people to whom he is related:

Tous avaient eu intérêt à faire disparaître Septicius Clarus. Ceux de Santa Barbara, parce qu'il disait tout haut ce mal que les autres avaient fini par apprivoiser. Vespasien, parce que le Professeur le savait prêt à assassiner Alba. Alba, parce que le Vieil Homme avait deviné sa vengeance. La Collègue du lifting, parce qu'elle ne supportait pas les tristes. L'infirmière, parce qu'elle n'était pas assez payée et qu'elle n'en pouvait plus de langer tous ces vieux. Les loups, parce qu'ils étaient loups (VH 127).

The pleasure the inhabitants of Santa Barbara, Vespasien, Alba, the Face-lifting Colleague, the nurse and the wolves get out of the death of the Old Man shows the encroachment of barbarism on civilisation. In this sense, the Old Man's body is comparable to the unidentified woman's in the novel and Gloria's in *Possessions*, all of which are a reflection of the effect the invasion of the wolves has on the community in Santa Barbara. This condition implies that the murderers of the Old Man, the unidentified woman and Gloria are affected by the forces of evil, forces which turn them into borderline creatures who are the embodiment of the Kristevan concept of <<l'abject>> (1980, 9).

Looking in the Mirror

By <<l'abject>>, Kristeva means <<Ni sujet ni objet>> (1980, 9). As she writes in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*, <<De l'objet, l'abject n'a qu'une qualité – celle de s'opposer à je>> (1980, 9). This calls for an analysis of the relationship between the subject and the object in her formulation of the two points around which the subject's signification is organised – <<au stade du miroir et à la <découverte> de la castration>> (1974, 43) – in *La révolution du langage poétique*. Briefly,

[au stade du miroir] produit cette <intuition spatiale> qu'on retrouve au cœur du fonctionnement de la signification: dans le signe et dans la proposition. Mais dès lors, pour saisir une image placée en face et unifiée dans le miroir, le <petit de l'homme> en reste séparé, agité qu'il est dans son corps par cette motilité sémiotique [...] qui, elle, le morcelle plutôt qu'elle ne le figure (1974, 44).

The separation between the image, with which the mirror stage presents the child, and the child itself positions the former as the object, the other. The construction of the Other, according to Kristeva, is completed by castration: <<La castration parachève ce processus de séparation qui pose le sujet comme signifiable, c'est-à-dire séparé, depuis toujours affronté à un autre>> (1974, 44-45). The confrontation between the subject and the object then constitutes a scene of looking in the mirror, a scene which can be used to describe the Kristevan concept of <<l'abject>> (1980, 9).

In relation to Kristeva's novels, <<l'abject>> is represented by the borderline creatures, Vespasien, the inhabitants of Santa Barbara, Pauline Gadeau and Michael Fish, who are neither human beings nor animals, neither the colonisers nor the colonised, in *Le vieil homme et les loups* and *Possessions*. The fact that the borderline creatures are in between human beings and animals, the colonisers and the colonised blurs the boundary between good and evil, civilisation and barbarism, which makes the subject the mirror image of the object, and vice versa. The interface, which is born out of the confrontation, between the subject and the object in Kristeva's fictional

representation of <<l'abject>> brings us back to the idea of the borderline creatures as strangers to themselves. For their encounter with the wolves detaches them from their other selves that have souls, except in the case of Michael Fish who is evil already. As strangers to themselves, they or their false selves give themselves up to violence and hatred, with the result that they eliminate those who are not like them in their society. Their victims, the Old Man, the unidentified woman and Gloria Harrison, however, can be seen as the mirror image of their other selves that have souls, since the outsider and the foreigners in Santa Barbara embody the power of civilisation and are thus a threat to the forces of evil. The connection between the power of civilisation and foreignness, on the other hand, points to the Old Man, the unidentified woman, and Gloria Harrison, with whom the borderline creatures' other selves can be identified, as strangers to the borderline creatures.

With the Old Man, his exclusion from the community in Santa Barbara is also accompanied by his attempt to exert influence on them, an attempt which complicates his outsider status. This is illustrated by his anxiety over the inhabitants of Santa Barbara's surrender to the forces of evil:

- Les gens ont peur, la peur leur ferme les yeux, ils préfèrent dormir. Sinon, il faudra bien se décider à chasser ces loups, non?

Le Vieil Homme reprenait sa rengaine devant Alba qui restait toujours seule à l'écouter, cependant que les voisins lui tournaient le dos avec le sourire torve qu'on adresse aux cas désespérés.

Mais on savait. Tout le monde savait déjà (VH 13).

Neither being assimilated into the community in Santa Barbara nor turning away from it, the Old Man lives on the border between outside and inside his society. This paradox¹⁹ conveys the image of him as a borderline creature that is, however, a stranger to the borderline creatures invaded by the wolves. The difference between his borderline state and other borderline creatures', in involving a series of neither/nors relating to both parties' identity, produces what Kristeva calls abjection in him.

By abjection, Kristeva refers to <<Les diverses modalités de *purification* de l'abject – les diverses catharsis>> (1980, 24). In this sense, the relationship between abjection and the abject is ambiguous. As Kristeva puts it in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*, <<Frontière sans doute, l'abjection est surtout ambiguïté. Parce que, tout en démarquant, elle ne détache pas radicalement le sujet de ce qui le menace – au contraire, elle l'avoue en perpétuel danger>> (1980, 17). This idea of a revolt against what threatens the subject is embodied in her fictional representation of the Old Man as a

¹⁹ See Judith Still's reading of the Kristevan concept of the abject as "defined with a series of neither/nors" and "must exist on the border *between* inside and outside" in "Horror in Kristeva and Bataille: Sex and Violence", *Paragraph* 20, 3 (1997), pp. 222-223.

borderline creature in *Le vieil homme et les loups*.

Confronted with the forces of evil, to which the borderline creatures invaded by the wolves or the abject yield, the Old Man as a borderline creature repels them. Yet they hover at the edges of his existence, threatening him with invasion. As he acknowledges in his conversation with his pupil Alba Ram about his attempt to purify the borderline creatures invaded by the wolves or the abject, <<On ne peut rien contre ces bêtes-là, on ne peut rien, il faut s'y faire>> (VH 13). To be accustomed to the fact that these borderline creatures <<se laissait empoisonner>> (VH 14) means that there is a possibility that the forces of evil will overpower him. This appears in the scene in which he realises that he is surrounded by the wolves from within, a result which comes from his borderline relationship with the forces of evil:

Seul dans la bulle d'une douleur qui ne lui appartient pas. Elle vient des loups, elle est aux loups. Lui, il a froid dans sa peau. C'est sa conscience d'être autre. Pour combien de temps encore? Il ne sait s'il faut préserver ce froid. La vie serait-elle cette différence hérissée, tremblante? (VH 116)

Not certain about whether he is able to resist the forces of evil within him, he is vulnerable to their threat, a fact to which his death attests. His failure in defeating what threatens him problematises the ambiguous relationship between abjection and the abject, of which the stories of the unidentified woman in the novel and Gloria Harrison in *Possessions* are a representation.

The implication that the unidentified woman and Gloria exemplify beings who are not able to revolt against the forces of evil points to them as the mirror images of the borderline creatures invaded by the wolves or the abject. Yet, unlike the borderline creatures invaded by the wolves or the abject, who turn themselves from the victims of the forces of evil into the representatives of the wolves, the unidentified woman and Gloria remain the victims of violence arising from the invasion of the wolves up to the point of their death and beyond it. Their corpses thus embody the interface between good and evil, civilisation and barbarism, which become the borders between abjection and the abject.²⁰ Through their corpses, the narrator Stéphanie Delacour is disgusted with the forces of evil, whereas the borderline creatures invaded by the wolves or the abject satisfy their bloodthirstiness.

The corpse of a drowned woman in *Le vieil homme et les loups* is described by the newspaper reporters from <<C'est dimanche à Santa Barbara>> as <<Une inconnue ... Personne n'est venu réclamer la jeune anonyme dont le corps a été repêché, suite à une noyade précédée d'une crise cardiaque>> (VH 182). This account of the death of <<la jeune anonyme>> (VH 182), according to Stéphanie, is unbelievable: <<On se fiche du monde! Qui a jamais vu une

²⁰ Compare this point with my discussion about the "The Sacrificial Body" in Kristeva's novels in the sixth chapter of this thesis.

crise cardiaque balancer une jeune femme au fond d'un lac?>> (VH 182-183) Her anger then drives her to criticise the political and social reality of Santa Barbara:

Il me restait toujours le témoignage du jeune Clean que je devrais décidément rechercher, mais que personne ne prendrait au sérieux. Et les marques de crocs? Tout le monde les avait vues. Seulement, puisque le mutisme scelle la trace ultime des loups – silence, personne ne dira rien (VH 183).

The vice of the inhabitants of Santa Barbara's cover-up is an expression of their inability to feel,²¹ which takes the form of exercising violence and repulses Stéphanie. To resist the forces of evil, Stéphanie makes an effort to understand <<L'œuvre des loups>>, namely <<les morts de l'Anonyme et du Vieil Homme>> and, more problematically, the birth of the borderline creatures invaded by the wolves or the abject – Alba and Vespasien (VH 186). This, however, ends in her turning into <<Une louve. Qui connaît la logique et en parle>> (VH 186).²²

By suggesting that she is prepared to talk about <<L'œuvre des loups>>, she, as a she-wolf who is one of the borderline creatures invaded by the wolves, will not participate in the double crime committed by Alba and Vespasien: <<le meurtre simultané et réciproque de la victime et du bourreau, interchangeables>> (VH 186). Rather, she is aware of the effect the forces of evil have on her, from which abjection emerges. While she does not revolt against what threatens her, she keeps it at bay because it is different from her other self. The separation of evil and good, barbarism and civilisation, within her demonstrates a fictionalisation of the idea of abjection as itself <<un mixte de jugement et d'affect, de condamnation et d'effusion, de signes et de pulsions>> (1980, 17), writes Kristeva in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*. In psychoanalytical terms, this means <<De l'archaïsme de la relation pré-objectale, de la violence immémoriale avec laquelle un corps se sépare d'un autre pour être, l'abjection conserve cette nuit où se perd le contour de la chose signifiée et où n'agit que l'affect impondérable>> (1980, 17). Here the other body from which the body becomes separated in order to enter the Symbolic is the maternal body,²³ of which the victims and opponents of the forces of evil's, the Old Man and Stéphanie's, other selves in Kristeva's novels are the embodiment. For it is in discarding their other selves that the Old Man and Stéphanie become social, entering the monsters' world, a world which they simultaneously acknowledge to be in perpetual danger. They as the borderline creatures in this sense can be compared with those who are invaded by the wolves or the abject; both embody a

²¹ See my discussion about the inhabitants of Santa Barbara as melancholics-depressives in the previous chapter, p. 80.

²² Compare this point with my discussion about Stéphanie as the embodiment of the Imaginary Father in the first chapter of this thesis, p. 46.

²³ For a detailed analysis of the maternal body as an abject in Kristeva's theorisation of abjection, see, for instance, Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*, pp. 55-61.

revolt of being which is, as Judith Still terms it in her reading of the Kristevan concept of abjection, "a twisted braid of affects and thoughts".²⁴ Yet abjection leads the Old Man and Stéphanie to separate the forces of evil within them from their other selves, whose return balances the threat posed by the abject.

The interaction between abjection and the abject illustrated by the stories of the Old Man and Stéphanie in turn becomes a reflection of the signification of the corpses of the unidentified woman in *Le vieil homme et les loups* and Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*. As we have seen in our discussion about the death of the unidentified woman and its connection with the political and social reality of Santa Barbara, the corpse is the border between abjection and the abject. Through it, the forces of evil, of which the abject consists, express themselves and arouse disgust in Stéphanie. This scenario reappears in the murder of Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*, through which the maternal body is conflated with the abject.

Recalling her return to Santa Barbara because of her friend Gloria's murder, Stéphanie tells us how evil Santa Barbara is: <<Une semaine ne s'était pas écoulée depuis que l'avion d'Air France m'avait ramenée ici. Pourtant, la même certitude m'avait saisie: je n'avais jamais quitté cette ville. Affinité physique et cependant honteuse avec je ne sais quelle méchanceté>> (P 27). The feeling she has about being in Santa Barbara reminds her of <<un de ces rêves qui précèdent et annoncent un dérangement intestinal>> (P 27), which is an evocation of the Kristevan concept of abjection. Yet her dislike for Santa Barbara is itself involved in her complicity with the forces of evil:

À croire que je suis habitée par un autre personnage, trouble et inopérable, que je préfère ignorer mais qui, tout compte fait, me possède, aime ces sales rues, ces passants péniblement lents qui se bousculent pour se donner l'illusion de se hâter, ces gratte-ciel réfléchissant le vide, ces restaurants juchés sur quarante étages de plastique d'où les lueurs des bidonvilles et les réverbères des ponts se transforment en guirlandes de lucioles (P 27).

The invasion <<un autre personnage>> makes upon her is reminiscent of the threat the abject poses to the subject, who tries to detach itself from the maternal body but remains affected by it, in Kristeva's theorisation of abjection in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*. As the embodiment of the abject, <<un autre personnage>> is the maternal body which, having been the mother, will turn into <<un abject. Repoussant, rejetant; se repoussant, se rejetant. Ab-jectant>> (1980, 20).

By that, Kristeva refers to the borderline relationship between the mother and the child in the latter's attempt to release the hold of <<l'entité *maternelle* avant même que d'ex-ister en dehors d'elle>> (1980, 20). As she explains,

²⁴ Still, "Horror in Kristeva and Bataille: Sex and Violence", *Paragraph* 20, 3 (1997), p. 222.

La difficulté d'une mère à reconnaître (ou à se faire reconnaître par) l'instance symbolique – autrement dit ses embarras avec le phallus que représente son père à elle ou son mari – n'est évidemment pas de nature à aider le futur sujet à quitter l'auberge naturelle. Si l'enfant peut servir d'indice à sa mère pour son authentification à elle, il n'y a guère de raison qu'elle lui serve d'intermédiaire afin qu'il s'autonomise et s'authentifie à son tour (1980, 20).

In this sense, the mother has to be made abject in order to facilitate the separation from her, because the child feels that separation is impossible. In becoming an abject mother,²⁵ the mother is not-yet-object. This means that the child is not-yet-subject. The borderline relationship between the mother and the child then makes the latter unable to see "if the abject is itself (the alter-ego deceives) or its other (the mother's body is still immediate)" (1993, 57), says Kelly Oliver in her analysis of the Kristevan concept of the abject and its connection with abjection in *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*.

The idea of the abject as the double of the child who is not-yet-subject, which cannot be separated from that of the abject as the mother who is the child's other and who is not-yet-object, points to the abject as in between the self and the other. This can be applied to our argument about Kristeva's fictional representation of the victims and opponents of the forces of evil as assimilated into the abject but conscious of the difference between themselves as the abject and their other selves, who, before turning into the abject, are the embodiment of the maternal body. As the maternal body turns into an abject, the difference between itself and the abject is, however, ambiguous. This is further complicated by the fact that the abject is itself resistant to unity, as represented by the borderline creatures invaded by the wolves. Neither a human being nor an animal, the abject in Kristeva's novels is a stranger to itself, inhabiting the city of Santa Barbara. Under its influence, civilisation becomes alien to the inhabitants of Santa Barbara, who were cultivated before they turned into barbarians. The metamorphosis they undergo in turn makes those who are different from them strangers to their society. Yet the strangers to their society are in fact the mirror images of their other selves that have souls. These series of ambiguous relationships between the selves and the others call to mind Kristeva's study of the foreigner in *Étrangers à nous-mêmes*.

Like the abject, which is in between the self and the other in the formation of the subject, the figure of <<l'étranger nous habite: il est la face cachée de notre identité, l'espace qui ruine notre demeure, le temps où s'abîment l'entente et la sympathie>> (1988, 9), says Kristeva. The foreigner's relationship with us is thus comparable to the ambiguous relationships between the others and the selves in Kristeva's novels. By recognising this figure, of whom the wolves in

²⁵ This is Kelly Oliver's terminology, *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*, p. 48.

Kristeva's novels are the embodiment, within them, for instance, the inhabitants of Santa Barbara are spared detesting him in themselves. This constitutes what Kristeva describes as <<Symptôme qui rend précisément le <nous> problématique, peut-être impossible>> (1988, 9). As she goes on to explain, <<l'étranger commence lorsque surgit la conscience de ma différence et s'achève lorsque nous nous reconnaissons tous étrangers, rebelles aux liens et aux communautés>> (1988, 9). This symptom also appears in the stories of the victims and opponents of forces of evil, that is, the Old Man and Stéphanie Delacour, who are strangers to the inhabitants of Santa Barbara, in Kristeva's novels. With them, the figure of the foreigner embodied in the wolves is a stranger to them when they are conscious of the difference between him and their other selves that have souls; yet he disappears when the Old Man dies at the hands of the wolves and Stéphanie is inhabited by <<un autre personnage>> (P 27). The assimilation of the Old Man and Stéphanie and the figure of the foreigner in turn resembles the stories of the victims and opponents of forces of evil and the murders of the unidentified woman in *Le vieil homme et les loups* and Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*: both signify the subjects' inability to resist the invasion of the wolves. At this point these characters' other selves that, before becoming the abject, are the embodiment of the maternal body, turn into the abject.

In becoming the abject, the corpses of the Old Man, the unidentified woman and Gloria Harrison embody the death of civilisation. With respect to the stories of the unidentified woman, who is the double of the protagonist Alba Ram, and Gloria, the signification of their corpses is further related to the question of their residence status as foreigners in Santa Barbara. In other words, the invasion of the forces of evil embodied in their corpses is a reflection of their murderers' phobia about foreigners. The fear of the strange, uncanny or foreignness is, however, the negative counterpart of the need for identification, for the inhabitants of Santa Barbara <<se définissaient, comme tout un chacun, par le besoin>> (P 277) and that foreshadows the unidentified woman's and Gloria's destiny. The murders of the unidentified woman and Gloria thus convey a lack of respect for difference,²⁶ which is associated with hatred. Through the inhabitants of Santa Barbara's hatred towards them and those who are on their side, horror reveals itself. At this point the fictional world of <<une crise de civilisation>> connects up with the reality, in Kristeva's view, of our own societies. The erasure of the boundary between imagination and reality then brings forth a remedy for "the times of dreary crisis",²⁷ since it confronts the abject.

²⁶ I shall develop this point further in the next section.

²⁷ See John Lechte's reading of Kristeva's theory of abjection in *Julia Kristeva*, p. 158.

As Kristeva tells us in her reply to Bernard Sichère's question, in an interview in <<Roman noir et temps présent>>, about how one should bear witness to <<ces éléments éthiques>> that are at the core of her novel *Le vieil homme et les loups* and at the core of her own discourse, <<Il ne faut pas avoir peur d'être déceptif, si c'est le chemin du savoir et de la vérité face à la <dépression nationale>²⁸ dont je parlais>> (1992, 83):

Honnêtement, il me paraît impossible de tenir un discours qui fasse l'économie de la négativité. Il faut sortir de cette idéologie consensuelle dont nous sommes entourés, de cette mise en avant trompeuse d'un discours de rassemblement qu'on appelle de partout pour évacuer les <problèmes>. Face à cet état général que j'ai décrit récemment dans un colloque au Sénat comme une <dépression nationale>, je ne crois pas que le temps soit venu pour les discours rassurants qui voudraient prendre la succession de ce discours <positif> que nous avons connu et qui était le marxisme (1992, 83).

Her belief in the function of a discourse on negativity as undoing negativity is how she presents the abject as threatened with its own force. Once it is understood, the abject as negativity disappears. Yet, as it is, the question of how it is possible to eradicate the abject from our own societies if we are inhabited by the abject itself ensues from this attempt to free ourselves from <<cette idéologie consensuelle dont nous sommes entourés>> (1992, 83). An answer to that question is what Noëlle McAfee calls "abject strangers" in her essay on Kristeva's analysis of exclusion, "Abject Strangers: Toward an Ethics of Respect", in *Ethics, Politics, and Difference in Julia Kristeva's writing* (1993, 116).

Abject Strangers: Toward an (Impossible)²⁹ Ethics of Respect

The term "abject strangers" embraces both the Kristevan concept of abjection, which, in McAfee's view, "functions similarly to Heidegger's notion of the nothing" (1996, 116), and the Kristevan theory of the foreigner. According to McAfee, "the import of the nothing makes it problematic to try to reconcile strangeness by trying to do away with abjection. Somehow we have to learn to *live with* and perhaps even *use* abjection" (1996, 116-117), depending on circumstances:

If this were simply a psychoanalytical, i.e. personal, problem, living with abjection could be resolved. Yet the problem becomes a political and ethical one when we see that Kristeva's description of abjection also applies to the foreigner. So if Kristeva's analysis holds, then the foreigner performs a necessary function for subjectivity and political identity (1996, 117).

²⁸ See Kristeva, *Lettre ouverte à Harlem Désir*. Also, compare this point with my discussion about the presence of trans-historical <<maladie de la douleur>> in post-modern society in the previous chapter, p. 68.

²⁹ I use the concept of the impossible, which is identical to the Kristevan concept of the *chora*, to suggest that the possibility of speaking of an ethics of respect lies in the impossibility of speaking of it.

The idea of “living with abjection” as a way of reconciling strangeness entails a revolt against the abject with the abject. In this sense, the abject is threatened with its own force, which can be related to Kristeva’s discussion about the possibility of eradicating negativity from our own societies by reacquainting ourselves with negativity itself. Here we are also the abject, against which the victims and opponents of the abject revolt but which lives with them. Through encountering the abject, the victims and opponents of the abject then live with abjection, an experience which involves the idea of themselves as foreigners who perform “a necessary function for subjectivity and political identity” (1996, 117), to quote McAfee.

In relation to Kristeva’s novels, the victims and opponents of the abject, of which the inhabitants of Santa Barbara are the embodiment, as foreigners become so because the abject occupies the place of the subject in the relationship between the subject and the object. The natives of Santa Barbara, in as much as they embody the abject, find the foreigners in their society strange, unwilling to do all they can to be the inhabitants of Santa Barbara. Consequently, it is necessary for them to exclude difference from their world in order that their identity be preserved. The elimination of the foreigners from their society in turn brings up the question of ethics that consists in the complex relationships between themselves and those who are different from them. In terms of their relationship with their victims and opponents, the Old Man and Stéphanie, ethics is absent from their hatred towards the latter but re-emerges in the encounter between the forces of evil and those of civilisation within the latter. For the recognition of the forces of evil in the Old Man and Stéphanie’s encounter with the abject implicates the Old Man and Stéphanie in the violence of the political and social reality of Santa Barbara. This implication in violence will ultimately pave the way for the possibility of doing away with the negativity that haunts the real post-modern world. The process of “living with abjection” the Old Man and Stéphanie experience points to an impossible ethics of respect: without an understanding of the abject, the Old Man and Stéphanie are not able to live with abjection. On the other hand, their suffering from the invasion of the abject is indicative of the inhabitants of Santa Barbara’s inability to respect them for their difference.

The lack of an ethics of respect reflected in the inhabitants of Santa Barbara’s behaviour towards the Old Man and Stéphanie finds its expression in the murders of the unidentified woman and Gloria Harrison. Judging the unidentified woman and Gloria, who are foreigners in Santa Barbara, to be others that are not like them, the inhabitants of Santa Barbara eliminate them to suppress the threat of civilisation. Yet the corpses of the unidentified woman and Gloria are themselves reminders of the sacrificial characteristics of humanity, which embody a silent revolt against barbarism. At this point an impossible ethics of respect emerges from the unidentified

woman and Gloria's surrender to the forces of evil and this is involved in their residence status in Santa Barbara as foreigners who perform "a necessary function for subjectivity and political identity" (1996, 117). The association of the idea of an impossible ethics of respect with McAfee's interpretation of Kristeva's analysis of exclusion thus exemplifies the stereotype of foreigners who are hated and destined to suffer. By reinventing the image of foreigners as hated others, Kristeva's fictional representation of the violence in our own societies poses the question of the social struggle to live with foreigners. This is the theme of her book *Étrangers à nous-mêmes*, in which she describes the situation of foreigners "as a source of hopelessness and confusion".³⁰ Yet that situation is also "an opportunity to overcome [those] feelings of estrangement and to experience exaltation and enthusiasm".³¹

A representation of her theorisation of a foreigner's situation is the story of the heroine Olga Morena in her autobiographical novel *Les Samourais*. Opening the novel with Olga's departure for Paris, she reminisces, through her fictionalised double, Olga, about her life story that can be described as a cultivated foreigner's experience of living in societies that are different from the one in her homeland – Bulgaria. The intellectual milieu in France, a country in which she is based, is at the core of her retrospective exploration of a foreigner's situation. Describing her arrival in Paris, she says after she is disappointed about the sight of Paris (LS 15),

Vingt-deux ans de vie *là-bas* s'étaient cristallisés en quelques proverbes, eux aussi de service, quoique sans intérêt. <En cas de difficulté, envisager le possible ... envisager le possible ... envisager le possible ...> La phrase lui piquait les nerfs à coups d'épingle et le froid du salon de service commençait à la déprimer. <Envisager le possible ... envisager le possible.> Nul visage, pas de cible (LS 16).

The idea of <<envisager le possible>>, by which she is haunted, suggests her helplessness in a foreign country, for it forces her to confront problems she might have. This is expressed in her interest in exploring her adaptability to the reality of Paris, a reality which is in conflict with her expectations of it when she first arrives in the city. After she settles in the city, however, she does not feel that she is a foreigner:

Elle était frappée et, pour tout dire, déboussolée par la proximité immédiate qu'ils [i.e. ses amis: Cédric, Heinz, Carole, Roberto, Martin, Edelman, Bréhal ...] lui témoignaient. Plus qu'une acceptation, une sorte de parenté spontanée. Comme s'ils avaient vécu ensemble depuis l'enfance. Peut-être, après tout? Elle était prête à le penser. Puisqu'ils avaient lu les mêmes livres. Inattendues, quand même, ces portes ouvertes des studios, des chambres de bonne, des séminaires, des laboratoires, des instituts [...] (LS 29).

³⁰ See Kristeva's interview with France-Culture broadcast in 1988, which is translated by Ross Guberman as "Julia Kristeva in Person" in *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, p. 4.

³¹ Ibid.

Although the harmony of her relationship with the French is inseparable from the fact that she learned the French language and was exposed to French civilisation at a young age,³² the “exaltation and enthusiasm” she feels are a contrast to her initial impression of Paris. Her success in overcoming a sense of estrangement relating to the illusion she has about life in Paris can be traced back to the scene in which she is determined to assimilate herself into the society in which she lives:

Le quartier Saint-Michel était glauque, les rares réverbères faisaient l’effet de lucioles transies dans le brouillard. Les voitures roulaient à toute allure, les gens se pressaient, volubiles. Brusquement, elle se sentit fatiguée et seule, seule à pleurer. Elle ne pleurera pas, elle ira se faire une beauté (LS 27).

Her determination to turn her loneliness into an inner strength foreshadows her success in becoming one of the inhabitants of France. At issue in this illustration of a foreigner’s situation, following the description of the interaction between herself and her friends, is the French’s respectful attitude towards this foreigner in their society.

Narcissistic or not, since opinions grow out of personal experience, Olga’s view of the French people emphasises an ethics of respect in the social struggle to live with foreigners. This can be seen as a fictionalisation of the life story of Kristeva, who is her double in reality. For the French people, in Kristeva’s view, do not find her to be well assimilated into French culture, despite her acknowledgement that she is.³³ Yet they communicate that to her indirectly. Thus, she does not “always find their reactions painful”, although she is “constantly reminded that [she comes] from somewhere else”.³⁴ The recognition of difference in both her and the French people’s attempt to understand the other gives rise to the possibility of their ability to live with difference. This makes them strangers to themselves, a result which embodies what Kristeva calls the <<L’éthique de la psychanalyse>> in *Étrangers à nous-mêmes* (1988, 284). By that, she refers to the function of psychoanalysis as an invitation to live with alterity, which, she argues, was Freud’s project (1988, 284). As she puts it,

Freud ne parle pas des étrangers: il nous apprend à détecter l’étrangeté en nous. C’est peut-être la seule manière de ne pas la traquer dehors. Au cosmopolitisme stoïcien, à l’intégration universaliste religieuse, succède chez Freud le courage de nous dire désintégrés pour ne pas intégrer les étrangers et encore moins les poursuivre, mais pour les accueillir dans cette inquiétante étrangeté qui est autant la leur que la nôtre (1988, 283-284).

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Her analysis of the Freudian concept of alterity that is within us, which points to us as <<nos propres étrangers>> (1988, 268), is the foundation on which her interpretation of how psychoanalysis is experienced is built. As she maintains, psychoanalysis provides us with <<un voyage dans l'étrangeté de l'autre et de soi-même, vers une éthique du respect pour l'inconciliable>> (1988, 269). This ethics of psychoanalysis, according to her, implies a politics.

That politics, she goes on to suggest,

s'agirait d'un cosmopolitisme de type nouveau qui, transversal aux gouvernements, aux économies et aux marchés, œuvre pour une humanité dont la solidarité est fondée sur la conscience de son inconscient – désirant, destructeur, peureux, vide, impossible (1988, 284).

Psychoanalysis thus calls on us to work towards the kind of mankind she imagines, which requires us to recognise the difference in us as the condition of our being with others. On this point, it is the unconscious that allows us to be with others, an idea which relates her concept of the ethics of psychoanalysis to Lacan's definition of the unconscious as the discourse of the other.³⁵ The workings of the unconscious then make it possible to expect the emergence of <<Une communauté paradoxale>> that is made up <<d'étrangers qui s'acceptent dans la mesure où ils se reconnaissent étrangers eux-mêmes>> (1988, 290). This means

En l'absence d'un nouveau lien communautaire – religion salvatrice qui intégrerait la masse des errants et des différents dans un nouveau consensus, autre que celui du <plus d'argent et de biens pour tout le monde> –, nous sommes amenés, pour la première fois dans l'histoire, à vivre avec des différents en misant sur nos codes moraux personnels, sans qu'aucun ensemble embrassant nos particularités ne puisse les transcender (1988, 290).

By living with differences in moral codes, we are our own foreigners and the strangeness in our identity, for Kristeva, can found a new ethics and politics.³⁶ Reflected in this ethics of psychoanalysis, which implies a politics, is the respect for the irreconcilable, which Kristeva applies to her fictional representation of the story of the foreigner Olga Morena in *Les Samourais*. The ethics of respect embodied in Olga's situation is, however, the positive form of the concept of "abject strangers", a concept which the stories of the victims and opponents of the forces of evil', the Old Man and Stéphanie Delacour's situation in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, embody. The implications of the (impossible) ethics of respect that is essential for the ethics of

³⁵ See Lacan, *Le séminaire, Livre I: Les écrits techniques de Freud, 1953-1954* and *Le séminaire, Livre II: Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse, 1954-1955*.

³⁶ Compare this point with my discussion about the concept of "A Her/ethics of Maternity" in Kristeva's novels in the fifth chapter of this thesis. Like psychoanalysis, which provides a fundamental metaphor through which we can accept the stranger in/as ourselves, maternity provides a fundamental metaphor for an ethics through which we can love the other in/as ourselves.

psychoanalysis, in bringing together Kristeva's discussion about a foreigner's situation and her critic McAfee's concept of living with abjection, bring this chapter to an end.

Here an understanding of the concept of the (impossible) ethics of respect resides in the ways the subjects live with difference. By recognising the difference in them as the condition of their being with others, the subjects show respect for the strangers in themselves. Similarly, by living with abjection as a way of reconciling difference, the subjects learn to respect the fact that they are strangers to themselves; their identity is a product of the interaction between abjection and the object that is threatened with its own force. The impossible ethics of respect, like the Kristevan theory of an ethics that respects the irreconcilable, implies a politics: through encountering the object that is threatened with its own force, the subjects disable the violence inherent in the object. This, for Kristeva, is the solution to the problem of the violence of our own societies, in which people no longer respect each other. Despite the problematics of the boundary between fiction and reality, her attempt to introduce us to the strangers in ourselves deserves consideration. More importantly, the idea of us as strangers to ourselves points to us as subjects-in-process who embody the interaction between what she calls the semiotic and the symbolic, which is the theme of the second part of this thesis: sex and text.

AN INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO: SEX AND TEXT

FRENCH FEMINIST THEORY AND ANGLO-AMERICAN FEMINISM

Following the discussion about Kristeva's search for identity in psychoanalysis, which completes our exploration into the correlation between French feminist theory and post-colonial (feminist) theory illustrated by her novels, this chapter shall address the implications of the Kristevan concept of a subject-in-process. This will lead into an examination of the debate between French feminist theory and Anglo-American feminism, a debate which is essential for the study of the relationship between Kristeva's theory of time, of maternity and of body, and her novels in the fourth, fifth and sixth chapters of this thesis.

In terms of Kristeva's theorisation of an ethics that respects the irreconcilable in *Étrangers à nous-mêmes*, the term subject-in-process refers to the idea of the subject as a stranger to itself. As a borderline creature, the subject-in-process has a divided identity, consisting of what Kristeva calls the semiotic and the symbolic,¹ for the maternal body from which it tries to separate in order to enter the symbolic is associated with the semiotic. The association of the semiotic with the maternal body, which points to the semiotic as the feminine, is contrasted with that of the symbolic with the Law-of-the-Father which is the masculine. In this sense, the subject-in-process, which is constituted through the interaction between the feminine and the masculine, is sexually undifferentiated.

The issue of sexual identity, to which the Kristevan theory of the signifying process² gives rise, ushers in the term French feminist theory, which concerns the concept of the feminine. Briefly, the feminine refers to woman as concept and is at the core of the early work of the French feminists,³ Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous, who, together with Kristeva, embody an Anglo-American construction of French Feminism.⁴ Taking up Lacan's suggestion that woman does not exist, Irigaray agrees that the feminine is always repressed into the unconscious; it remains at the level of a potentiality that cannot be developed. In order to locate and identify it, women need to examine the male philosophical and psychoanalytical texts that have contributed to the construction of the "masculine feminine" or the phallic feminine. Her work, which is characterised by its imitation of a plurality of meanings and fully exploitative of the ambiguity in language, is an attempt to locate the false feminine. By refusing one authoritative reading or approach to the text, her work maintains a

¹ See my discussion about the Kristevan theory of the signifying process in the introduction to this thesis, pp. 5-6.

² Ibid.

³ Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*, p. 164. See also my discussion about the difference between American and French theorists and practitioners' perceptions of feminism in the introduction to part one of this thesis, p. 16.

⁴ See my discussion about the term French feminist theory in the introduction to part one of this thesis, pp. 14-15.

distance from phallogocentric language or the Symbolic. In other words, for her, the basis of the feminine libidinal economy is multiplicity; any “definition” of the feminine must always be plural and provisional, an affirmation with which Cixous concurs. As Cixous describes in her essay <<Le Sexe ou la tête?>> in *Les Cahiers du GRIF* (1976), a feminine text “can’t be predicted, isn’t predictable, isn’t knowable and is therefore very disturbing. It can’t be anticipated, and I believe femininity is written outside anticipation: it really is the text of the unforeseeable”.⁵

Cixous’s and Irigaray’s quest for a feminine text that is in defiance of the Symbolic or the masculine appears, from a feminist perspective, to be more political than Kristeva’s interest in the workings of the signifying process. For Cixous and Irigaray, sexual difference is located at the level of *jouissance*, a word which Jacques Lacan discussed in *Le séminaire, Livre XX: Encore, 1972-1973*. The publication of that seminar in France, says Leon S. Roudiez in his introduction to Kristeva’s *Desire in Language*, “bore a photograph of Bernini’s sculpture, the *Ecstasy of St. Teresa*, on its cover” (1980, 16). “What is significant”, as Roudiez goes on to explain,

is the *totality* of enjoyment that is covered by the word ‘jouissance,’ both in common usage and in Lacan; what distinguishes common usage from Lacan’s usage [...] is that in the former the several meanings are kept separate and precipitated, so to speak, by the context, whereas in the latter they are simultaneous – ‘jouissance’ is sexual, spiritual, physical, conceptual at one and the same time. Lacan speaks of *jouissance sexuelle* and of *jouissance phallique*, but in each case ‘jouissance’ is both grammatically and conceptually qualified; and that sort of ‘jouissance’ ‘does not involve the Other as such,’ for it merely deals with the OTHER (*q. v.*) and its (his/her) sexual attributes. The ‘jouissance’ of the Other ‘is fostered only through infinitude’ (*ne se promet que de l’infinitude*) (1980, 16).

The idea that “[‘jouissance’] merely deals with the OTHER (*q. v.*) and its (his/her) sexual attributes” (1980, 16), in which the feminine is trapped, is what leads Irigaray and Cixous to search for a way of representing the repressed. Their attempt to replace the masculine with the feminine by a text that “can’t be predicted, isn’t predictable, is not knowable”⁶ is, however, problematic, for it falls into the pitfall of the very dichotomy which they try to destabilise. This is why Kristeva puts forwards an alternative view of language rather than inventing a new unconscious that is feminine in order to dislocate the unconscious that is masculine. For, as she has pointed out in her essay <<Le temps des femmes>> in *Les nouvelles maladies de l’âme*, most of the aesthetic value of creations by women <<répètent un romantisme plus ou moins euphorique ou déprimé, et mettent en scène une explosion du moi en manque de gratification narcissique>> (1993, 316). Thus, in locating the feminine in the pre-oedipal phase, she does not describe it as a new unconscious but its effect in language

⁵ Translated by Annette Kuhn as “Castration or Decapitation?”, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7, 1 (1981), p. 53.

⁶ Ibid.

as semiotic, which she places in opposition to the Symbolic. For her, the subversive nature of the semiotic lies in its contradiction with, its disruption of, the Symbolic, not in its potentiality of replacing the latter; its fragmented, occasional, provisional presences within the Symbolic as its power to undermine the order installed by the Symbolic in turn allow a challenging of the limits of representation.

Although the feminine in Kristeva's formulation of the semiotic involves the risk of being incorporated in the Symbolic, it is as mobile as Cixous's *écriture féminine* and Irigaray's *parler femme*, both of which are texts that can be defined as feminine. This characteristic of the French feminist theorists' works constitutes most Anglophone feminists' understanding of the term French feminist theory, a term which is often conflated with French feminism. The implications of the use of these terms among the Anglophone feminist reading public, in the French feminist Christine Delphy's view, allow "American, and more widely, English speaking scholars" to project an image of French feminism as apolitical, not involved in women's movement.⁷ In so doing, Anglophone (feminist) scholars are able to present their feminism as politically women-oriented. The contrast between Anglo-American feminism and an Anglo-American construction of French feminism becomes, however, the debate between Anglo-American Feminism and French feminism, a debate which is the source of the feminist critic Toril Moi's book *Sexual/Textual Politics*.

In that book, Moi argues that Anglo-American feminism is concerned with praxis, less alert to theory, and French feminism is more theoretically conscious and elaborate. Her argument, according to Pam Morris in her study of the relationship between literature and feminism in *Literature and Feminism: An Introduction*, provides a framework for further research on the difference between Anglo-American feminism and French feminism. Yet, while accounts of feminist literary criticism and theory⁸ after Moi suggest a rather hostile opposition between Anglo-American feminism and French feminism, they also acknowledge the over-simplification of such a view. As Morris has noted, "There has always been cross-fertilization of ideas between [Anglo-]American and French feminists, and within each country many approaches to feminism have been in debate rather than any monolithic national version holding sway".⁹ The distinction between Anglo-American feminism and French feminism therefore must be understood to be shorthand for the different informing intellectual tradition. This serves as a starting point for an attempt to tease out the

⁷ See my discussion about the Anglo-American construction of French feminism in the introduction to part one of this thesis, pp. 14-15.

⁸ See, for instance, Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson and Peter Brooker (eds), *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, pp. 129-130; Mary Eagleton (ed), *Feminist Literary Criticism*, pp. 8-11; Sara Mills and Lynne Pearce (eds), *Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading*.

⁹ Morris, *Literature and Feminism: An Introduction*, p. 95.

problematics of the debate between Anglo-American feminism and French feminism by means of Kristeva's novels in this part of the thesis.

The implication that the distinction between the political and the intellectual can be destabilised involves accepting the distinction itself. For the cause of the distinction as that "Instead of speaking to each other, the Anglo-Americans and French seem frequently to be speaking past each other" only becomes clearer if we do so, observes the feminist critic Mary Eagleton in *Feminist Literary Criticism* (1996, 11). Through unmasking the distinction, we can then put the Anglo-Americans in dialogue with the French and establish a relationship between the political and the intellectual within the domain of feminist literary criticism and theory. Yet the possibility of sexualising the textual woman or textualising the sexual women¹⁰ by means of Kristeva's novels requires an explanation of how the term reality functions in her novels. For the sexual women on whom the Anglo-Americans centre are real, biological entities, yet the reader is always aware that a literary work is not itself reality but rather a special form of reflecting reality. This explains why the French find the Anglo-Americans' discovery of a sense of identity, history and the credibility of women's experience illusory and their extensive work on the woman author, the female tradition and images of women at best an interesting cul-de-sac. However, it is equally undeniable that people ordinarily possess a reflection of reality, a consciousness not merely of objects but of human nature and social relationships. Hence, at stake in trying to sexualise the textual woman or to textualise the sexual women by means of Kristeva's novels is the term reflection that registers the substance of a novel as different but not separated from reality.

Here we shall turn to the Marxist critic György Lukács, one of the major theorists who are interested in the workings of the term reflection in novelistic writings. Rejecting the naturalism of the European novel, Lukács returns to the old realist view that the novel reflects reality, not by rendering its mere surface appearance, but by giving us a truer, more complete, more vivid and more dynamic reflection of reality. To "reflect", for him, is to transpose a framed mental structure into words. Thus, a truly realistic work will present us with the images of an "intensive totality" that corresponds to the "extensive totality" of the world itself. Order and not a mere mechanical collision of fragments is what the "extensive totality" of the world possesses and the novelist should render this in an "intensive" form, which can

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion about the different meanings that Anglo-American and French feminisms give to the terms "women", "woman" and "feminine", see Mary Eagleton (ed), *Feminist Literary Criticism*, pp. 9-10. To put it concisely, Anglo-American feminism centres on "women" who, "at this moment in history, are forging a politics based on shared experience and needs. French interest converges not on women but on 'woman' who, as [Alice] Jardine points out, is not a person but a 'writing effect' ... When the French talk of 'l'écriture féminine' they do not mean the tradition of women's writing that [Virginia] Woolf and [Elaine] Showalter have laboured to uncover, but a certain mode of writing which unsettles fixed meanings. On the other hand, when Anglo-Americans use the term 'feminine' they are usually referring to that cultural stereotype which patriarchy tells us is the appropriate, even 'natural' form of behaviour for women".

only be achieved if all the contradictions and tensions of social existence are realised in a formal whole.¹¹

In this sense, Kristeva's fictional works that "reflect" the novelist's subjective impression of reality but fail to offer an overall objective or scientific enquiry of the external world may not be regarded as realist novels in terms of Lukács's definition of a "correct" reflection of reality. However, these pieces of psychological realism, which employ different fictional characters to illustrate the inner workings of the novelist's mind, to some extent "reflect" the "extensive totality" of the world. Through the fictional characters that possess the function of "reflecting" social realities in Kristeva's novels, I shall argue, a relationship between the terms feminism and psychoanalysis that characterises Kristeva's writings and carries the connotations of anti-feminism can be established. This relationship will then provide a solution to the debate between Anglo-American feminism and French feminism.

The idea that Kristeva's fictional representation of social realities, embodied in the stories of her fictional characters, is mediation of the conflict between feminism and psychoanalysis indicates a politics of interpretation. At issue in this politics of interpretation are the themes of Kristeva's novels, a politics which is different from the emphasis on how the Kristevan theory of love, of melancholia and of abjection are retranslated into her novels in the first part of this thesis. Nevertheless, both instances of interpreting Kristeva's novels are the product of the skilled reader's¹² or the interpreter's reaction to what the Russian formalist Roman Jakobson calls the "message".¹³ This leads into the question of the complex interaction between author, text and reader.

As Kristeva's novels are highly autobiographical,¹⁴ reading them in a way involves the skilled reader in practising the romantic-humanist view of literary criticism and theory, a view which stresses the author's life and mind as expressed in his or her work. In this sense, looking for biographical information about Kristeva is what the skilled reader is expected to do in order to construct a plausible interpretation of the "message". The problem with this method is, as the French critic Roland Barthes has pointed out in his influential essay <<La mort de l'auteur>>,¹⁵ that it closes off interpretation. To open up the "message" to a plurality

¹¹ See Lukács, *Studies in European Realism, The Historical Novel and The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*.

¹² A "skilled reader", in Jonathan Culler's endeavour to shift the focus of literary criticism and theory from the text to the reader, means that he or she, when faced with a text, seems to know how to make sense of it – to decide what is a possible interpretation and what is not. See his *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature*.

¹³ See Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson and Peter Brooker's discussion of Jakobson's diagram of linguistic communication (ADDRESSER → CONTEXT; MESSAGE; CONTACT; CODE → ADDRESSEE) in *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, pp. 4-6 and pp. 47-51.

¹⁴ See my overview of Kristeva's novels in the introduction to this thesis, pp. 12-13.

¹⁵ This essay is translated by Stephen Heath as "The Death of the Author" in *Image Music Text*. See also Michel Foucault's essay "What is an Author?"

of interpretations, Barthes suggests that a radical refusal of the ideology of authorship is necessary. Although the survival of a text, as another influential French critic Jacques Derrida has suggested, could be seen as a phenomenon of repeatability of the written signs,¹⁶ John R. Searle has told us in his "Reply to Derrida" that even when a sentence of English is weaned from "all production or origin, putative or otherwise", "there is no getting away from intentionality, because a *meaningful sentence is just a standing possibility of the corresponding (intentional) speech act*".¹⁷ Searle's suggestion secures the position of the writer or the speaker, upon which the reading of Kristeva's novels in this thesis is based: in the first part of this thesis, this is illustrated by the argument about the "message" as correlative to Kristeva's theoretical writings on love, melancholia and abjection, whereas in this second part of the thesis, it will be expressed in the idea that the themes of the "message" provide a framework for an analysis of the Kristevan theories of time, maternity and body.

The above statement at the same time highlights the importance of the role of the skilled reader, who, for the literary theorist and critic Jonathan Culler, can determine the rules that govern the interpretation of texts. However, as different skilled readers produce different interpretations, some theorists are dubious about the possibility of developing a theory of reading at all. With respect to this, Culler argues in *The Pursuit of Signs* that it is this variety of interpretation that theory has to explain.¹⁸ He suggests that, while the conventions that apply to one genre will not apply to another and the conventions of interpretation will differ from one period to another, the interpretative rules used by skilled readers to approach texts can be formulated into a systematic one. For skilled readers acquire this "grammar" of

¹⁶ See his *Limited Inc*, p. 8. In his discussion of Condillac's *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, Derrida rediscovers *absence*, a specific difference in writing that Condillac and his followers have failed to grasp in their understanding of the relationship between "communication" and writing. This could be roughly understood as the absence of the receiver and the absence of the addresser. First, according to Derrida, all writing must be capable of functioning even in the absence of "every empirically determined receiver in general. And this absence ... is a rupture in presence, the 'death' or the possibility of death of the receiver inscribed in the structure of mark [of writing]". Second, the writer (the sender or the addresser) ought to be able to say his or her disappearance or non-appearance in general (for instance, the non-presence of his or her intention to say something meaningful, of his or her wish to communicate, etc.) from the production of the mark. "For a writing to be a writing it must continue to 'act' and to be readable even when what is called the author of the writing no longer answers" for what he or she has written, for what he or she seems to have signed. As such, the meaning of an utterance is never identifiable with the intentions of its writer and the survival of a text can only be seen as a phenomenon of repeatability of the written signs.

¹⁷ In *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*, p. 202.

¹⁸ Theory of the reader's role in literature, as Terry Eagleton has pointed out in *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, "is a fairly novel development" in the history of modern literary theory. He suggests that "one might very roughly periodize the history of modern literary theory in three stages: a preoccupation with the author (Romanticism and the nineteenth century); an exclusive concern with the text (New Criticism); and a marked shift of attention to the reader over recent years" (1996, 64). For reader-oriented theories, see, for instance, Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Exploration in the Semiotics of Texts*; Stanley Eugene Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretative Communities*; Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, and *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology*; Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward An Aesthetic of Reception*.

literature in educational institutions, where they are trained for “conformity in reading practices”. Yet, clearly, there is problem with this theory of reading, namely how systematic it can be about the interpretative rules used by skilled readers. As Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson and Peter Brooker have noted, Culler “does not allow for the profound ideological differences between [skilled] readers which may undermine the institutional pressures for conformity in reading practices”.¹⁹ Thus, in reading this thesis, readers should have noticed and should continue to bear in mind the risk of simply taking for granted the existence of any entity called a skilled reader, defined as the product of the institutions we term “literary criticism”.

That said, the focus, in this part of the thesis, on the reading of Kristeva’s novels as on the themes within them can be seen as a reflection of the skilled reader’s “literary competence”²⁰ and their ideology. With the help of the effect the “grammar” of literature has on them, the skilled reader is able to apply the method of approaching the intention of texts in Kristeva’s novels. At the same time, their “literary competence” is involved in an ideology that constitutes the whole of their being. The interaction between their ideology and their “literary competence” is the basis of the chapter on time, in which the themes of Kristeva’s novels will be examined in terms of the meaning of language. One of the themes of Kristeva’s novels to be analysed in this instance is revolution and the call to think of the meaning of this word is a response to the critic Margaret Attack’s essay on the figure of the intellectual in *Les Samourais*. In that essay, entitled “The Silence of The Mandarins: Writing the Intellectual and May 68 in *Les Samourais*”, Attack, taking the word revolution in its literal sense, argues that Kristeva’s representation of the historical event May ‘68 is more romantic than revolutionary. As a romantic text, the “text of 68”,²¹ as Attack calls it, presents *Les Samourais* as figures of dissidence open to the forces of transgression, which silences *Les Mandarins*, the repressed voices of existentialist morality, who are the activists in comparison with the former.²² Yet, as I shall argue, this reading of Kristeva’s representation of intellectual history is problematic, since it does not take the metaphorical function of the text of 68 into account. I shall then demonstrate, in my reading of the text of 68, that a sense of revolution can be regained through the fictional characters Martin Cazenave and Carole Benedetti, whose love story, for Attack, silences the historical event May ‘68.

¹⁹ *A Readers’ Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, p. 83.

²⁰ All the terms here are Culler’s.

²¹ In *Paragraph* 20, 3 (1997), p. 249.

²² Yet, as Anne-Marie Smith has noted in her critique of Margaret Attack’s essay, despite the silence of *The Mandarins*, “both sets of figures are open to the transgressive, ironic play of Kristeva’s writing in this text. In Attack’s reading we witness the staging and repetition of a primal scene in which each generation witnesses and rewrites the scene of its predecessors as a dialogue around a drink. For Beauvoir’s *Mandarins* the talk is anti-colonialist, politically committed and wary of the lure of the Imaginary. For Kristeva’s orientalist *Samurai* there can be no economy of the Imaginary other place”, *Paragraph* 20, 3 (1997), p. 204.

It is in the process of regaining a sense of revolution that the relationship between the novel *Les Samouraïs* and Kristeva's theoretical writings on time can be established. Among the theoretical works of Kristeva on time, the book *Le temps sensible: Proust et l'expérience littéraire* is the source of the exploration into the correlation between the Kristevan theory of time and her fictional representation of historical events. Applying her discussion about how literature embodies time in *Le temps sensible* to her novels, I shall demonstrate how the fictional characters in her novels embody certain historical events that reflect the social realities of those periods. This refers to the protagonists Martin Cazenave and Carole Benedetti who embody the historical moment May '68 in *Les Samouraïs*, and the wolf man Vespasien and the speech therapist Pauline Gadeau who embody the criminal aspect of ancient Western civilisation in *Le vieil homme et les loups* and *Possessions* respectively. Through the stories of Vespasien and Pauline, which are representative of Kristeva's belief that modern men have not borne within themselves the inscription of the past, the theme of evil presents itself. To understand the meaning of the word evil, it is necessary to compel oneself to confront what Kristeva terms one's <<faux-self>> in *Les nouvelles maladies de l'âme* (1993, 16).²³

The notion of a false self, which Kristeva uses to explain how the peculiar nature of life today has led to the birth of borderline creatures that suffer from maladies of the soul, is implicated in her fictional representation of love stories. The wolf man Vespasien's marriage with Alba Ram in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, for instance, is one of the love stories that convey the presence of the Kristevan concept of a false self. This is illustrated by the fight to the death between the couple, which leaves two bodies that act but <<le plus souvent même sans la joie de cette ivresse performative>> (1993, 16), to quote Kristeva. The correlation between the Kristevan concept of a false self and the portrayal of Vespasien and Alba as borderline creatures in Kristeva's fictional representation of her view of love is further complicated by the description that if Alba were to have a child, it would ease her pain resulting from domestic violence. This theme of violence, which is expressed in the idea of maternity as natural for a woman to save her broken marriage, will lead off the discussion in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

The contamination of maternity with violence, however, can be traced back to Western philosophy that associates women *qua* mothers with nature and the body in

²³ I shall develop this point further in the fifth and sixth chapters of this thesis.

opposition to culture and the mind.²⁴ An analysis of the concept of hierarchized binary opposition²⁵ is thus part of the objective in examining the theme of violence in Kristeva's novels. This needs to be seen in the context of Kristeva's fictional representation of love stories, which leads into the subject of maternity. At issue in the exploration into how the relationships between men and women in Kristeva's novels embody the evils which inhabit Western philosophy is the essence of love as violence. Not only is domestic violence characteristic of the love story of the couple Vespasien and Alba in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, but also it dominates the heroine Gloria Harrison's marriage with Stanislas Novak in *Possessions* and the protagonist Martin Cazenave's extramarital relationship with Carole Benedetti in *Les Samouraïs*. These scenes of domestic violence shall constitute the discourse of "The War Between the Sexes",²⁶ a discourse whose other component is the adulterous relationships between men and women in Kristeva's novels. Adultery is thus a further theme in the fifth chapter of this thesis, a theme through which the novelist Kristeva expresses her distrust of love.

The couples who are the models of Kristeva's fictional portrayal of her distrust of love are Olga Morena and Hervé Sinteuil, Joëlle Cabarus and Arnaud Cabarus, and Rosalind Bergman and Edward Dalloway in *Les Samouraïs*. In all the couples, it is the wives who seek extramarital relationships with others. Their pursuit of the right to dominate their bodies and sexuality is described by Kristeva's narrators, Olga Morena and Joëlle Cabarus, as immoral, which points to the underlying violence associated with the word adulteress, since our perceptions of adultery, as Kristeva implies, have been tainted with bourgeois morality. To challenge the equation of sexual liberation with immorality, Kristeva's narrators not only present an alternative view of the question of adultery but also of the question of rape. Here Kristeva employs the newspaper reporter and amateur detective Stéphanie Delacour in *Possessions* to question the established view of the female body as the Object in the issues of

²⁴ Kelly Oliver has pointed out in *Womanizing Nietzsche: philosophy's relation to the "feminine"* that "Philosophy is full of metaphors that associate women *qua* mothers with nature and the body in opposition to culture and the mind" (1995, 165). See also, Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy*; L. Clark and L. Lange (eds.), *This Sexism of Social and Political Theory*; R. Baker and F. Elliston (eds.), *Philosophy and Sex*; Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka (eds.), *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology and the Philosophy of Science*; Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall (eds.), *Women, Knowledge and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy*; Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (eds.), *Feminist Epistemologies*; M. Whitford and M. Griffiths (eds.), *Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy*; S. Bordo and A. Jaggar (eds.), *Gender/Body/Knowledge*; Luce Irigaray, *Speculum de l'autre femme*; Bat-Ami Bar On (ed.), *Critical Feminist Essays in the History of Western Philosophy*.

²⁵ See Hélène Cixous, <<Sorties>>, in *La jeune née*, pp. 114-246.

²⁶ My use of this phrase comes from Kristeva's discussion about how women have been <<soient à l'écart aussi bien du principe unique, seul vrai et légiférant, de la Parole, que de la face (toujours paternelle) selon laquelle la procréation obtient une valeur sociale: à l'écart du savoir et du pouvoir>> in chapter 2 <<La guerre des sexes>> in *Des Chinoises*, p. 25.

rape and sex.²⁷ This is expressed in the idea of whether sex is rape or fulfilment of womanhood, in which rape is involved. If rape that is real violence against women can be practiced as sex, this negative type of sexual liberation would cause unease among those who subscribe to feminist or woman-centred perspectives. At the same time, this counter-representation of rape demands a cautious analysis of the female body that is implicated in the question of motherhood.

The sixth chapter of this thesis will take up the question of Kristeva's (counter-)representation of the body in her fictional works. The aim of counter-representing the female body, as the above discussion about the themes of the fifth chapter of this thesis demonstrates, is to make us see how certain ideologies of the female body, which many feminists would term "patriarchal", have been constructed. Violence, it seems, is the essence of these ideologies of the female body, which have their roots in European philosophical tradition,²⁸ a tradition which opposes the body to the mind and relegates it to a subordinate or secondary position. This mind-body split of the European philosophical tradition is embodied in the decapitated body of gifted translator Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*. Through the corpse of Gloria, which does not have a head, the symbolic violence of patriarchy that, as a social organisation, "produces and guarantees superior status for the male and inferior for the female"²⁹ is represented as the visible violence of the murder of Gloria. This illustration of the theme of violence embraces the theme of evil, since the brutalities of the murder are indicative of the fact that Gloria's killer, the speech therapist Pauline Gadeau, suffers from maladies of the soul.

The presence of the Kristevan concept of a false self in the discussion about Kristeva's fictional (counter-)representation of the body relates European philosophical tradition to the idea of a subject as a stranger to itself. For a subject's false self is left <<Sans identité sexuelle, subjective ou morale>> (1993, 16), an outcome which makes the subject a borderline creature which is a stranger to itself. The interaction between the false self as the other and the self within this borderline creature, in relation to European philosophical tradition, destabilises the dichotomy between body that is the other and mind that is the self. Moreover, the other in the borderline creature is the double of the maternal body, from which the self becomes separated in order to enter the Symbolic. Yet this maternal body, which has

²⁷ See, for instance, Claudia Moscovici's *From Sex Objects to Sexual Subjects*, in which she argues that "a model of subjectivity which corresponds more closely to the postmodernist political objectives of encouraging respect for (inter)subjective differences depends in part upon safeguarding those elements of rationalist universal ethics that enable us to differentiate among differences" (1996, 4).

²⁸ See, for instance, Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' & 'Female' in Western Philosophy*, pp. 2-9 for a discussion of how Greek theories of knowledge produce the body/mind dichotomy.

²⁹ See Sara Mills and Lynne Pearce's definition of patriarchy as a political concept in *Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading*, p. 310.

to be made abject in order to facilitate the separation from her,³⁰ hovers at the borders of the self's existence, "threatening the apparently settled unity of the subject with disruption and possible dissolution",³¹ says Elizabeth Grosz in her reading of Kristeva's theory of abjection.

The function of the other in Kristeva's search for identity in psychoanalysis brings us back to the discussion about the French feminists' theories of the feminine that is a threat to the Symbolic. As a textual subject, the feminine, for some Anglo-American feminists, does not contribute to the cause of feminism that concerns real women, although it is helpful in undoing the evils of language that imposes a social order on the speaking subject's experience. However, to suggest that it is apolitical as a consequence of its problematic relationship with feminism overlooks the fact that theory does not come about without practice. As Toril Moi has pointed out in *French Feminist Thought: A Reader*,

Nobody thinks in a vacuum: intellectual life is always crucially shaped by its political and social context. The relationship between political and the intellectual is particularly obvious in the case of feminist thought: it is a truism to insist that without a women's movement there can be no sustained development of feminist thought, and that feminist thought remains deeply affected by changes in its political environment (1987, 1).

The inseparability between "women's movement" and "feminist thought" refers to the impingement the political environment of 1970s France has on the work of the French feminists, of which the *Mouvement de la Libération des Femmes* or the MLF is the source.³² Taking pride in its diversity, its defiant lack of organisation, and its disdain of "masculine" needs for hierarchy and leaders, the MLF is "the chance to live and experience concretely the meaning of the word movement", writes Liliane Kandel in her essay <<Journaux en mouvement: La Presse féministe aujourd'hui>>.³³ This implies the similarity between French feminism, from which French feminist theory develops, and Anglo-American feminism, an idea which the work of both French and Anglo-American feminist scholars who question a certain representation of the relationship between French feminism and Anglo-American feminism echoes.³⁴

One instance of a presentation of French feminism as as political as Anglo-American feminism is the French feminist Christine Delphy's essay "The Invention of French Feminism: An Essential Move". Posing a challenge to the way some Anglophone (feminist)

³⁰ See my discussion about the relationship between the abject and the maternal body in the previous chapter, pp. 94-95.

³¹ Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*, p. 71.

³² See my discussion of the MLF in the introduction to part one of this thesis, pp. 16-17.

³³ Translated by and quoted in Dorothy Kaufmann-McCall, "Politics of Difference: The Women's Movement in France from 1968 to Mitterrand", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 9, 2 (1983), p. 283.

³⁴ See, for instance, Christine Delphy, <<La passion selon Wittig>>, *Nouvelles Questions Féministes* 11-12 (Winter, 1985), pp. 151-156 and Claire Moses, "French Feminism's Fortune", *The Women's Review of Books* 5, 1 (1987), p. 44.

scholars represent French feminism, the essay is itself a representation of French feminism as not feminism in France. For “what is happening in France on the feminist scene, either from a theoretical or from an activist point of view”, according to Delphy, has little to do with what “is taught as ‘French Feminism’” among the Anglophone feminist reading public.³⁵ The question then is, what is feminism in France? Such a question, in Delphy’s view, however, constricts the diversity of feminism in France, since “Feminists in France don’t need to call their feminism a particular name any more than American feminists call theirs ‘American feminism’”.³⁶ Other French feminists Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron have made similar points in their introduction to the comprehensive collection of “the texts that have been produced in France since May 1968 around and about the women’s liberation movement” in *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*:

There has been a temporary working together of diverse women’s groups on such central issues as contraception and abortion; a split between reformists and radicals; a development of tensions, often ruptures, between homosexuals and heterosexuals; a formation of early links, later shattered, between feminist movements and other political, social movements whose goal is also to change both consciousness and the quality of life (1980, ix).

The complexities of feminism in France resemble what is going on in France and what has been happening in the United States. This can be said to be a French version of Anglo-American feminism in relation to the idea of French feminist theory as an Anglo-American construction of French feminism. Involved in this French version of Anglo-American feminism is the development of particular theoretical positions, of which French feminist theory is a ramification.

The relationship between French feminist theory and feminism in France in this instance presents itself as the double of the contrast between Anglo-American constructions of French feminism and Anglo-American feminism. Difference as characteristic of the reciprocal relationship between the intellectual and political in turn allows us to approach the real French feminism extensively. This shall lead to the idea of French feminist theory, the object of analysis in this thesis, as a subject-in-process that is constituted through its interaction with feminism, an idea on which the conclusion of this thesis focuses.

³⁵ In *Yale French Studies* 87 (1995), p. 191.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

IV TIME

La photo protège de la disparition.
Julia Kristeva, *Les Samouraïs*

In recounting her life story, the auto-biographer Olga Morena, who is the fictional double of Julia Kristeva in *Les Samouraïs*, recasts the philosophical question of time and being in the act of taking photographs. This happens in the scene in which she meets up with her supervisor Fabien Edelman, who is the fictional double of Lucien Goldmann, in order to prepare herself for study in France. In that meeting, Fabien is consuming vast quantities of food while talking with her and <<Elle ne [supporte] pas l'idée que cette belle nourriture si bien présentée aille s'engouffrer sans laisser de traces dans les toilettes>> (LS 21). Thus, she gets out her camera to save the food for eternity.

Through the act of taking a photograph of the food, she demonstrates how <<La photo protège de la disparition>> (LS 21). In capturing the specific moment of time, the photograph of the food then becomes a representation of timelessness. The existence of this representation of timelessness is, however, impossible without the workings of "literary competence" with which educational institutions equip the skilled reader.¹ This leads into the objective of the first section of this chapter: the encounter between the skilled reader and the author through the "message" that consists of things and beings situated in different moments of time. At issue in this attempt to unravel the intention of the "message" is the concept of superimposition. Just as the author superimposes her understanding of the world to which she belongs on the "message", so the skilled reader superimposes their ideology on the reproduction of the author's ideology.

The interaction between the author, the "message" and the skilled reader in this instance points to time as inseparable from space. Proceeding in a different time sense from linear or historical time, space complicates the narration and the reading of the "message". In *La révolution du langage poétique*, Kristeva introduces the term intertextuality or, as she prefers to call it, transposition to designate that space-time. The fact that the "message" is a space-time in turn takes on what she describes as a Nietzschean vision of <<éternel retour>> in *Sens et non-sens de la révolte* (1996, 64), a concept which embraces transformative power. The influence the transformative power has on the author, as well as on the skilled reader, will constitute the discussion about space as psychical time in the second section of this chapter. That discussion is further related to Kristeva's analysis of female subjectivity in

¹ See the introduction to part two of this thesis, pp. 108-109.

<<Le temps des femmes>> in *Les nouvelles maladies de l'âme*, which emphasises her concept of a signifying process. The ultimate goal of this chapter is to see how the interaction between the semiotic and the symbolic, the feminine and the masculine, works with the Kristevan theory of time. Through the gendering of time in Kristeva's novels, the debate between French feminist theory and Anglo-American feminism can also be revisited.

Superimposition: Time Embodied

As discussed above, a literary text, consisting of things and beings situated in different moments of time, is a reproduction of an author's ideology. To understand it, the skilled reader needs to apply their "literary competence" to it; that competence is involved in their ideology. In other words, the skilled reader should unravel the themes of the "message" which the author chooses to communicate to her readers.

The themes of Kristeva's novels to be discussed in this chapter are revolution and evil, both of which embody the notion of superimposition that brings historical time and literature together. In *Les Samouraïs*, the interrelationship between the historical moment and literature resides in Kristeva's representation of revolution, whereas in *Le vieil homme et les loups* and *Possessions*, it emerges from the description of the dark side of ancient Western civilisation, with which contemporary society is identical. Thus, the reading of Kristeva's novels in this section is not a comparative study of them as it is in the following sections of this chapter and in the next two chapters.

The novel *Les Samouraïs* begins with a quasi-memoir of the psychoanalyst Joëlle Cabarus, who is one of the narrators and who tells us that the novel is about the story of Olga, Hervé, Martin, Marie-Paule, Carole and a few others. Reading the story of these characters, we journey with them from Paris to China to New York and back to Paris, an experience which spans twenty-five years. This points to time, in its etymological sense, as pivotal in the formation of the novel; and the period May 1968, whose nature and meaning, as Margaret Attack has pointed out, "have been at the heart of the hundreds of books and thousands of articles",² is a marked *mise-en-scène* in Part II of that story, <<Saint-André-des-Arts>> (LS 99-191).

An important reference that runs through Kristeva's work, the historical event May '68 has various meanings at different stages of Kristeva's intellectual projects. In *Les Samouraïs*, it means "an 'announcement' of [the dénouement] to the intellectual narrative",³ says Attack, for it is void of a sense of revolution that is essential for the movements involved

² Attack, "The Silence of The Mandarins: Writing the Intellectual and May 68 in *Les Samouraïs*", *Paragraph* 20, 3 (1997), p. 249.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

in it. The implication that Kristeva's representation of the May '68 episodes is rather negative and does not do justice to the May protesters becomes apparent when Attack suggests that chapter 2 of Part II in *Les Samourais*, which she calls "the text of 68", is a text of "The Silence of 'The Mandarins'". This comes from the comparison she makes between the way Kristeva delineates the intellectuals and the way the feminist thinker Simone de Beauvoir represents the existentialists and sociologists, who constitute a narrative of the intellectuals during the period May 1968, in *Les Mandarins*.

After arguing that the text of 68 eliminates The Mandarins or the existentialists and sociologists documented in Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins* altogether from the May '68 episodes, Attack goes on to explain how the fictionalisation of the intellectuals in the text of 68 silences the intellectuals in reality:

We hear of Lauzun/Lacan prevented by anarchists from giving his seminar, of Bréhal/Barthes's lack of engagement, through the recycling [*sic*] of the now famous anecdote underlining his political marginality: 'Barthes says: "Structures don't take to the streets." We say: "Neither does Barthes"' [...] the one structuralist who is generally seen as the hegemonic successor to Sartre, namely Foucault, is also rendered speechless: 'Schermer's intelligence can only be pacified by going right into the heart of non-meaning. That intelligence can only love bodies in the raw, aphasic. It laughs with an aphasic grimace.'⁴

The silence of The Mandarins at last comes to be symbolised by the story of the protagonist Martin Cazenave, whose forsaking of anthropology for painting "announces" the end of the intellectual narrative. This is reinforced by the psychoanalyst Joëlle Cabarus's commentary on May '68 as about love rather than about revolution in her diary: <<*La révolution est une grève du <for intérieur> que remplacent la parole en commun, le psychodrame, le passage à l'acte, ou carrément l'amour*>> (LS 174). Love as the replacement for revolution then juxtaposes May '68 with Joëlle's research on the debauchee Thérèse Cabarrus, who lived during the French Revolution. This juxtaposition, concludes Attack, minimises May '68 to "a pale imitation" of the French Revolution.⁵

Although Attack's interpretation of the text of 68 is a faithful account of Kristeva's representation of May '68 which is dominated by the love story of the couple Martin Cazenave and Carole Benedetti, the essence of that story, I shall argue, is not love but revolution. Carole's refusal to be invaded by, to belong to, Martin and her joining the Revolutionary Feminists without hesitation in that text are evocative of the Women's Movement in post-war France (LS 121-124, 131-132). Thus, what follows demonstrates an

⁴ Ibid., p. 251. The quotation is Attack's translation. The original reads, <<*L'intelligence de Scherner ne s'apaise que d'aller jusqu'à la nuit de l'insensé. Cette intelligence ne doit aimer que des corps crus, aphasiques. La grimace de son rire est un rire aphasique*>> (LS 184).

⁵ Ibid., p. 252.

alternative reading of the text of 68, in which a sense of revolution can be regained through a comparison between the May movements and the French Revolution in the love story of Martin and Carole.

The reality of the love story of Martin and Carole as the war between the sexes has to do with the institution of marriage.⁶ As the narrator Olga Morena tells us in the text of 68, Carole's parents' infelicitous marriage has left her a child-hater.⁷ Her view of motherhood in turn affects her relationship with Martin. She detests the idea that what Martin really wants is a baby machine, whereas Martin suspects that the reason she does not want to have a child with him is that she is barren:

Il arrivait que l'enveloppe de l'ensemble vide se déchire. Cette pilule que Carole avalait tous les soirs dressait devant Martin comme une barrière barbelée qui l'écrasait d'impuissance, d'inutilité.

- J'ai entendu dire que certaines femmes prennent la pilule pour cacher qu'elles sont stériles. Peut-être que tu ne veux pas d'enfant parce que tu ne peux pas en avoir? (LS 136)

The accusation Martin makes against Carole relates infertility to contraception, which problematises Carole's attitude towards motherhood. Yet the fact remains that Carole does not want to have a child. Her approach to motherhood thus calls to mind the emphasis put on contraception, as well as on abortion, by the Women's Movement in post-war France.

An example of the above feminist approach to motherhood appears in the pamphlet *Libérer nos corps ou libérer l'avortement?* that Claire Duchen discusses in *Feminism in France: From May '68 to Mitterrand*. Written by women in the *Féministes Révolutionnaires* group, the pamphlet concerns the issues of abortion and contraception, both of which are "located in the context of women's sexuality in a critique of heterosexual relations, analysed as male domination of women in an institutionalised, oppressive power structure" (1986, 57), writes Duchen.⁸ This search for a different perspective to define women's sexuality, which centres on the relationship of the body to the unconscious and which in its extreme form rejects heterosexuality altogether, has close parallels with Kristeva's fictional representation of the story of Carole. Choosing solitude in preference to motherhood, Carole embodies the idea of a revolt against heterosexuality. Through her, the text of 68 superimposes itself on the pamphlet *Libérer nos corps ou libérer l'avortement?*, from which a sense of revolution emerges. For the Women's Movement in post-war France conveys a time during which the multiplicity of feminist politics takes centre stage. While the "method" of avoiding male

⁶ See my discussion about the discourse of "The War Between the Sexes" in Kristeva's novels in the next chapter.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ See chapter 3, "French Feminists and Motherhood: Destiny or Slavery?", in *Feminism in France: From May '68 to Mitterrand*, pp. 49-66.

power over women by retaining fertility (women's power) but rejecting fertilisation (men's power), as Duchen has noted, only functions in its symbolic dimensions, the revolutionary aspirations of breaking down oppressive power structures are embedded in this feminist politics of motherhood.

The sense of revolution the skilled reader experiences in interpreting the relationship between the fictional representation of the May '68 episodes and the real Women's Movement in post-war France continues to be present in the fictionalisation of the French Revolution. In reality, the French Revolution, a time of a complex upheaval in 1789, which affected every aspect of government and society, was a turning point in French history with the effect of the *ancien régime* being dismantled in the name of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Yet, in *Les Samouraïs*, it is through Joëlle Cabarus's research on Thérèse Cabarrus, <<Notre-Dame-de-Thermidor, ou le Sexe contre la Terreur. Une séductrice face à Robespierre>> (LS 176), rather than the grand socio-political scenes of the French Revolution themselves that readers are brought from May 1968 to the eighteenth century. In this sense, to experience a sense of revolution conveyed by this fictionalisation of the French Revolution requires an analysis of the role of a debauchee who lived during the French Revolution; this is involved in the historical event May '68.

Inspired by Attack's designation of chapter 2 of Part II in *Les Samouraïs* as "the text of 68", I shall call chapter 5 of Part II "the text of the French Revolution" in my discussion of the theme of revolution. The essence of the text of the French Revolution as sexual liberation is represented by the story of Thérèse Cabarrus, in which she <<est dénoncée dès 1791 par la Chronique scandaleuse de cocufier son premier mari de Fontenay avec tout ce qu'on trouve de <patriotes> à l'Assemblée, et on en trouve alors beaucoup>> (LS 177). Her sexual behaviour is coupled with the fact that <<Elle n'inspire que les plaisirs des sens>>: <<Ses bras, ses grâces, ses larges épaules, ses beaux yeux, son nez irlandais, sa parure de perles d'or et de diamants> – tout est répertorié>> (LS 181). The image of her as a sexual object suggests, for Kristeva's narrator Joëlle Cabarus, that she <<incarne la force de la vie plaisante>> (LS 181). This interpretation of female sexuality points to the text of the French Revolution as the opposite of the text of 68. Yet, like the text of 68, in which the feminist Carole Benedetti seeks a way out of "male domination of women in an institutionalised, oppressive power structure",⁹ the text of the French Revolution poses a challenge to the ideology of immoral female sexuality. At this point a sense of revolution, emanating from a feminist politics of the female body and sexuality, locates itself in another time, the time of the novel or literature. This characteristic of the text of the French Revolution, as well as of

⁹ Duchen, *Feminism in France: From May '68 to Mitterrand*, p. 57.

the text of 68, is indicative of the fact that Kristeva's fictional representation of May protesters and the movements is not a text of love but of revolution.

The intention of the "message" as expressed in a feminist politics of the female body, sexuality and motherhood further relates the text of 68 to Kristeva's discussion about the historical event May '68 as a product of revolutionary social change in her early writings. This is also Attack's point in her reading of Kristeva's <<Mémoire>> and <<Un nouveau type d'intellectuel>> in "The Silence of The Mandarins: Writing the Intellectual and May 68 in *Les Samourais*". As Attack comments, the year 1968, for Kristeva, was a moment when "the constraints of languages and social groupings denying otherness and multiplicity" were replaced by "different configurations in which women, as dissidents, and as champions of a new relationship to the body and to the other, play a major role" (1997, 250). Yet these "different configurations" suggest to Attack not the diversity of politics about real women of the *Mouvement de Libération des Femmes* (or MLF) but Kristeva's statement that <<La femme, ce n'est jamais ça>>. ¹⁰ In other words, they are the embodiment of the idea of woman as a writing-effect instead of being an origin. The presence of the textual woman in the text of 68 in turn allows Attack to reinforce her argument that the text of 68 is the confrontation between the existentialists and the structuralists, an encounter which results in the emergence of a new type of intellectual – *Tel Quel*. This is embodied in Martin's abandoning anthropology for painting, in which painting is likened to "woman", a different type of language. ¹¹ By turning his attention to painting, Martin thus "announces" the end of the intellectual narrative in the light of Kristeva's own "different" intellectual project.

The interpretation of the text of 68 as an "announcement" of the end of the intellectual narrative is, however, in conflict with the way in which *Les Samourais* finishes. For at the end of the novel Carole "re-announces", through Joëlle, the anthropological project on the Wadani myths that Martin relinquishes earlier. As Joëlle writes on February 12, 1989, <<Tout le monde tourne autour du sacré. Certains pour y adhérer, d'autres pour voir comment c'est fait. Le sacré est un mythe en actes. Carole reprend contact avec lui en partant démonter les mythes wadanis>> (LS 454). The action Carole takes after receiving psychotherapy from Joëlle because of her problematic relationship with Martin, in which she sinks into melancholia and depression, ¹² brings "the intellectual narrative" to life. In so doing, she is getting back in touch with the sacred, which is associated with the image of her as the virgin in the text of 68. That image is embodied in her love for plants. Unable to deny

¹⁰ Kristeva, *Polylogue*, pp. 517-524.

¹¹ The word "different" refers to Kristeva's opening statement in which she describes the theoretical discourse developed in her book *La révolution du langage poétique*.

¹² See my discussion about Carole as a melancholic-depressive in the second chapter of this thesis, pp. 61-62.

her love for Martin yet unwilling to bear him a child, Carole turns to plants, because <<Seule une plante peut être fidèle. Éphémère, mais, tant qu'elle vit, d'une permanence fiable>> (LS 131). Her search for pure love, of which the plant is the embodiment, is indicative of her chastity, which is reflected in her attempt to dismantle the Wadani myths that privilege immorality and the Symbolic.

As Martin tells us in his analysis of the Wadani myths, the Wadanis have no sense of morality: <<Une société sans police, je veux dire sans État, mais le pouvoir est bien là et il appartient aux hommes>> (LS 106); <<[II] avait ainsi retenu des Papous, Indiens et autres sauvages que le pouvoir était au bout du pénis. Les Wadanis lui semblaient confirmer Lauzun, pour qui l'inconscient dit la même chose>> (LS 108). The reference to Lauzun/Lacan in his discussion of the Wadani myths allows Carole, who resumes his anthropological project, to challenge the idea of the intellectuals as silent in the text of 68. Although the representation of the work of Lauzun/Lacan in this instance may be oversimplified, the intellectual narrative is present in it. This "re-announcement" of the intellectual narrative in Carole's attempt to dismantle the Wadani myths is not possible without the help of the sacred as a myth. Here the sacred is played by Carole herself, who is a reincarnation of the Virgin,¹³ and is linked to the figure of the samurai for whom <<l'écriture est le seul acte durable de plaisir et de guerre rassemblés>> (LS 62). In other words, through writing, Carole, like the samurai, saves the intellectual narrative from silence.

The function of writing leads into the story of the auto-biographer Olga Morena, who writes a children's book after all her intellectual pretentiousness. For the action she takes, according to Joëlle, indicates that she is an intellectual warrior. As Joëlle comments,

Je vois, c'est un comble, mais de quoi? En définitive, toute littérature est peut-être faite pour les enfants. On dit que les romans sont achetés par les femmes. Je dirais: par les femmes-enfants, par les hommes-enfants. Il faut un don de rêverie naïve pour fabriquer encore de l'émotion avec ces signes ridés que sont les mots. Après tout, cela ne vaut peut-être la peine d'écrire que pour refaire le jeu de vie et de mort à l'usage des enfants que nous oublions d'être. Les uns vivent, les autres meurent, et les adultes-enfants se racontent des histoires artificielles pour ne pas mourir de leur vivant (LS 458-459).

This book for children is *Les Samouraïs*, through which Olga introduces some of the twentieth century's most influential minds, Lauzun/Lacan, Saïda/Derrida, Bréhal/Barthes, Wurst/Althusser, Scherner/Foucault and many others to her readers. By "announcing" their existence in Olga's representation of the intellectual narrative, the Parisian intellectuals of the late 1960s in turn embody the idea of writing as a weapon against disappearance. This is associated with Olga's friend Dan's book on the samurai, Jocho Yamamoto, who became a

¹³ See the first chapter of this thesis, p. 43.

priest in the late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century; an association which superimposes modern Western civilisation on ancient Oriental civilisation.

In his debut in the dialogue between Olga and her compatriot Dan, the samurai-priest-philosopher-poet Jocho Yamamoto <<avait voulu insinuer qu'il n'y a pas de meilleure façon d'agir – jusqu'à la mort, avec elle et au-delà – qu'en mariant l'art de la guerre et l'art de l'écriture>> (LS 61). A man of honour, he had also been a man of action, who believed that it is only death that makes us act: <<Le suicide volontaire n'achève pas, mais accomplit l'action de l'honnête homme>> (LS 60). With the hidden force that causes him to act, suicide together with secret self-love produce writing <<qui désobéit, qui dit <je> contre les interdits en faisant semblant de les respecter [...] Car tout art est un art martial où l'on se met à mort pour se refaire un nouveau corps, une nouvelle *forme*>> (LS 62, emphasis added). This martial art of the Japanese soul then travels across centuries and civilisation to be reincarnated in *Les Samouraïs*, a novel about the intellectuals in the *form* of <<*un livre pour enfants*>> (LS 458). In this sense, writing is an act against itself, because <<*cela ne vaut peut-être la peine d'écrire que pour refaire le jeu de vie et de mort à l'usage des enfants que nous oublions d'être*>> (LS 459). This idea embodies the theme of revolution, within which the late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century Japanese culture is superimposed on another time, the time of the novel or literature, and on another civilisation, post-war France.

As the examples of the interrelationship between the historical moment and literature in *Les Samouraïs* indicate, the sensation of revolution that enfolds readers lies in the construction of the characters. The theme of civilisation, which, through the characters who live in different historical moments, traverses two cultures to give readers the experience of a sense of revolution, continues to dominate Kristeva's allegorical novel *Le vieil homme et les loups*. In this allegory, which is partly a detective story and partly a philosophical fable, characters are given different metaphorical functions through the superimposition of ancient Roman civilisation on a modern criminal setting. At issue in this interrelationship between the historical moment and literature is the presence of a sense of evil.

The protagonist who embodies the forces of evil is the army surgeon Vespasien, of whom the inhabitants of Santa Barbara are the double. As the Latin professor, the Old Man, points out at the opening of the novel, the invasion of the community of Santa Barbara by the mysterious wolves has generated a sense of fear that conveys the presence of the ominous evil. To believe in the ominous evil is thus to believe in fear, as is apparent in the title of part I in the novel: <<Qui croire? La peur>> (VH 9). Yet Vespasien dismisses the Old Man's warning about the wolves and employs the phrase <<L'Homme aux loups>> to poke fun at him. He says to his wife, Alba Ram, the only student in whom the Old Man does confide, that <<<L'Homme aux loups>, tu as lu? Non mais, sans blague? On ne me la fait pas, à

moi! J'ai étudié toute la littérature sur la question, une vraie bibliothèque (*sic*)! Il en a vu combien, de loups, ton vieux radoteur?>> (VH 15) The implication that the Old Man does not know the meaning of <<L'Homme aux loups>> is ironic, for the reality is that Vespasien is unaware of the fact that he is turning into a wolf man. A discussion about the process of his turning into a wolf man will further make us see how our modern world, suggests Anna Smith, "forgets to remember those forms which once inhabited it, and in so doing, Kristeva believes, consumes itself in destructive fashion".¹⁴

To return to the historical moment of evil, in which the wolf man lives, we need to turn to Ovid's *The Metamorphoses*. In that book, the character Lycaon is punished by the God Jupiter and turns into a wolf. If we compare him with Vespasien in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, a sense of evil emerges. King of Arcadia, Lycaon, in order to discover if it is Jupiter himself who has come to lodge in his palace, orders the body of a hostage, who had been sent to him, to be dressed and served up at a feast.¹⁵ With a sword he cuts the throat of the hostage, then softens part of the quivering limbs in boiling water, and part he roasts with fire placed beneath. This angers Jupiter. Alarmed at the God's revenge, he takes flight but when he reaches the solitude of the country he howls aloud instead of being able to speak, his garments are changed into hair, his arms into legs, and he becomes a wolf. Yet he still retains vestiges of his ancient form: "His hoariness is still the same, the same violence appears in his features; his eyes are bright as before; *he is still* the same image of ferocity".¹⁶ This image of ferocity comes across centuries to be reincarnated in Vespasien, who practises the ancient art of Hippocrates on his patients in the same way that ruthless Lycaon treats his hostage. Murder is the essence of this theme of evil, which can be traced back to the guilty Cain, the first murderer in the Bible;¹⁷ the guilty Cain as the original form of <<L'Homme aux loups>> then relates Ovid's mythological world to the modern criminal world of the detective story *Possessions* which finds its historical sources of evil in the Bible.

The reference to the Bible as the source of the presence of a sense of evil in *Possessions* appears in the scene in which Stéphanie Delacour, who is also the narrator, meditates on the murder of the heroine Gloria Harrison. Comparing the way Gloria dies with how St. John the Baptist is murdered in the Bible, Stéphanie experiences the superimposition of modern criminal world on the historical moment of evil that is associated with the brutalities of the murderess Herodias:

La nuque ensanglantée sous sa tunique en poil de chameau, chargé de l'agneau crucifère, d'une croix de roseau, parfois même de sa propre tête coupée (quand celle

¹⁴ Smith, *Julia Kristeva: Readings of Exile and Estrangement*, p. 191.

¹⁵ Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, p. 16.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 17-18.

de Gloria, ici même, je le rappelle, était manquante), hasardé sur le rivage de la mer Morte, depuis deux millénaires s'avance vers nous saint Jean-Baptiste, le Précurseur, annonciateur du Messie. Arrêté par Hérode, il succomba en réalité aux vices d'Hérodiade, laquelle, après la danse lascive de Salomé, sa fille, voulut qu'on ôtât la tête du prophète afin de la faire servir à sa progéniture sur un plateau d'argent (P 14).

The machinations of Herodias, which lead Herod to decapitate St. John the Baptist, find their expression in the speech therapist Pauline Gadeau's hatred towards Gloria in the modern criminal world in *Possessions*. For it is in her detestation of Gloria's bad maternal behaviour that Pauline feels the need to cut off Gloria's head, a need which comes to the surface through the crime Gloria's lover Michael Fish commits, that is, strangling Gloria. The hatred Pauline feels for Gloria then numbs her soul; she becomes a living corpse when she is decapitating the unconscious Gloria: <<<Je> est mort, vive personne! Personne n'est cruel. Personne ne jubile. Ce qui vous paraît un carnage est tout simplement un acte chirurgical, neutre>>> (P 272). Her impassivity in turn likens her to the wolf man Vespasien who performs his surgical act in a nonchalant way in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, which points to the link between the story of Herodias and that of the guilty Cain who is the original form of Ovid's Lycaon.

The superimposition of the historical moments of evil on the modern criminal world illustrated by the stories of Pauline and Vespasien suggests that the protagonists are reincarnations of biblical and mythical characters. This distinguishes Pauline and Vespasien from Carole and Joëlle, in whom the historical moments of revolution and literature are fused through inter-textual referencing, in *Les Samourais*. Yet both illustrations of the interrelationship between the historical moment and literature embody the novelist Kristeva's perceptions of time as related to a psychoanalytical approach to contemporary crisis in civilisation and to feminist issues. In terms of the psychoanalytical approach to the evils of contemporary society in which we dwell, her perception of time is further related to her persistent concern for the need for innovation in personal and collective life, which is the theme of her theoretical work *Les nouvelles maladies de l'âme*.

As she says in discussing the question of the soul in *Les nouvelles maladies de l'âme*,
 Vous êtes en vie si et seulement si vous avez une vie psychique. Intolérable, douloureuse, mortifère ou jubilatoire, cette vie psychique – qui combine des systèmes de représentations transversales au langage – vous donne accès au corps et aux autres. Par l'âme vous êtes capables d'actions. Votre vie psychique est un discours en acte, nuisible ou salvateur, dont vous êtes le sujet (1993, 13).

Applying this to her representation of the theme of evil in her novels, lack of a psychic life from which the protagonists Vespasien and Pauline Gadeau suffer is the source of the evils of contemporary society. This means that the peculiar nature of life today is working to erase

memory-trace¹⁸ and hence, psychic depth. Affected by the destruction of psychic space, Vespasien and Pauline are narcissists who may suffer, but who feel no remorse. They are losing their souls, but they do not know it, for they are beings with false selves.

The condition of contemporary society embodied in the indifference of Vespasien and Pauline towards the living is described by the Old Man as impossible to change in *Le vieil homme et les loups*: it is <<Inutile de crier>> because <<la haine n'a pas été seulement mise au jour [...] la haine s'est installée. Imperturbable, insolente, sans frein. Elle se prend pour la vérité qui parle et agit à visage découvert>> (VH 100). The cyclical occurrence of evil and crime conveys Kristeva's belief that modern men have not borne "within themselves the inscriptions of the past", which, if they did, she argues, "would help them to be less susceptible to [...] bestiality",¹⁹ says Anna Smith. In this sense, the function of the fictional characters in the interrelationship between the historical moments of evil and literature is to reflect social realities. This has close parallels with the workings of the interrelationship between the historical moments of revolution and literature in *Les Samouraïs*, in which the characters Carole and Joëlle reproduce the text of the Women's Movement in post-war France and the text of the French Revolution. The construction of the characters as the building block of novel writing²⁰ then calls to mind Kristeva's discussion about how literature embodies time in *Le temps sensible: Proust et l'expérience littéraire*.

In her study of Proust, Kristeva shows readers a world of reading where she experiences how Proust, with his visionary style, unprecedented syntactic patterns and sensorial approach, creates living beings out of words, metaphor, metonymy, syntax, meditations and dreams. This becomes the backdrop for her fictional representation of the presence of a sense of revolution and of evil in the stories of her characters. Through word-presentation, out of which the characters in her novels are born, she records her experience and sense of the world to which she belongs. That world is situated in a specific moment of time, which the skilled reader attempts to understand by superimposing their experience and sense of the world to which they belong on it. The superimposition of the world to which the skilled reader belongs on the world to which the novelist belongs points to time as <<cette association de deux sensations qui jaillissent des signes pour me faire signe>> (1994, 209), says Kristeva in *Le temps sensible*. This time of discourse as that of reading, in bringing together the skilled reader and the novelist, makes the novels a space at which two psychic times, each possessing their individual experience and sense of the world, intersect.

¹⁸ See Sigmund Freud, *Civilisation and its Discontents*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 21, p. 70, for an explanation of the preservation of the memory-trace through the image of ancient Rome.

¹⁹ Smith, *Julia Kristeva: Readings of Exile and Estrangement*, pp. 191-192.

²⁰ Alain Nicolas, "Proust: 'A Search for Our Time'", in *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, p. 237.

Space: Psychological Time

The existence of the novels as the precondition for the encounter between the skilled reader and the novelist, in which beings and things are situated in different moments of time, brings up the question of memory. With the help of memory, the novelist creates a textual space in which the skilled reader moves between different historical moments: the May movements in 1968, the French Revolution in 1789, Japan in the late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century, ancient Rome (*The Metamorphoses*) and Palestine (*The Bible*), which are the sources of the way the novelist discusses civilisation in the past, and the modern twentieth century. The intersection of these historical moments in turn leads to the presence of a sense of revolution and of evil, which the skilled reader experiences by means of language. This suggests that the novelist has verbalised a sort of sensory time, which goes beyond <<un courant philosophique>> of Bergson and Heidegger <<[qui] cherche à saisir l'Être en interrogeant l'opacité du Temps>> (1994, 210), a theory which she has developed in her study of Proust in *Le temps sensible*.

Her theorisation of sensory time finds its expression in her representation of the narrator Stéphanie Delacour's rumination on the role of the author in the creation of a tale in *Le vieil homme et les loups*. As she says through Stéphanie after describing the story of the relationship between Vespasien, Alba Ram and the Old Man,

Ainsi peut commencer le récit du Vieil Homme et des loups, conçu de loin par un observateur anonyme et caché, qui n'est autre que l'auteur dissimulé de l'aventure. Pour peu que le meneur du jeu se révèle, que le narrateur occulte se manifeste et s'inclue dans l'histoire, celle-ci – jusqu'à présent onirique ou livresque, vraisemblable ou grotesque, vous l'avez remarqué – se transforme (par la seule implication de l'observateur dans un nouveau rôle) en quête d'énigmes, en enquête policière. S'il est vrai, par conséquent, que vous suivez le déroulement de ce conte dans le temps, les rebondissements de l'intrigue et les changements de genre qui vont se produire désormais sont, en définitive, une question d'espace, de distance, de géométrie psychique que le narrateur choisit avec ses mots.

Vous étiez invités jusqu'à présent dans un monde saugrenu: insolites personnages, fossiles d'une civilisation inconnaissable, morte de toute évidence, gnomes inabordables aux propos empruntés à quelque langue morte elle aussi, voire inexistante. Cet angle de vision octroie à l'écrivain une neutralité qui est en définitive une insolence: l'outrecuidance des gens sûrs d'eux-mêmes, de leur tradition et de leur foi, dans lesquelles se dissimule une hâte logique à conclure, c'est-à-dire fondamentalement une bêtise. Mais bêtise prestigieuse s'il en est, digne et créatrice, qui installe précisément l'autorité du créateur-auteur et ne se demande nullement comment cet homme et sa plume ont pu engendrer ou désirer ces louches créatures, ces étrangers en provenance d'une Atlantide engloutie, inopinément surgie du seul caprice de l'imaginaire (VH 69-70).

Through <<une bêtise>> that captures the writer's sense of the world to which (s)he belongs, the reader experiences beings and things situated in time. This interaction between the reader

and the author of the tale points to reading as a story that is made and unmade. In that story, the author, according to Stéphanie, says <<<je> de diverses manières>> (VH 72) and the reader transposes his or her own existence into it. The result of this interplay between the author and the reader is the indeterminacy of their identity; both become the Kristevan subject that is a subject-in-process.

The reference to the Kristevan subject ushers in Kristeva's psycho-linguistic study of language in *La révolution du langage poétique*. In that book, she propounds that <<toute pratique signifiante est un champ de transpositions de divers systèmes signifiants (une intertextualité)>> (1974, 60). This means that every signifying practice's <<<lieu> d'énonciation et son <objet> dénoté ne sont jamais uniques, pleins et identiques à eux-mêmes, mais toujours pluriels, éclatés, susceptibles de modèles tabulaires>> (1974, 60), which puts the speaking subject in an indeterminate position. The speaking subject as a subject-in-process implies that a literary text is not an isolated phenomenon but <<se construit comme mosaïque de citations>> and that <<tout texte est absorption et transformation d'un autre texte>>.²¹ This characteristic of writing finds its expression, in her novels, in the narrator Olga Morena's contemplation of her life in *Les Samouraïs*, a life which is itself an image of the composition of the novel:²²

L'avantage d'une vie (ou d'une histoire) disposée ainsi en étoile, où les choses bougent sans forcément se recouper, progressent mais ne se retrouvent pas, et où chaque jour (comme chaque chapitre) est un autre monde qui feint d'oublier le précédent, est de correspondre à une tendance semble-t-il essentielle au monde: à son état d'expansion congénital, à sa dilatation. Ce big-bang qui nous a faits tels que nous sommes et qui nous détruira pour créer un nouveau chapitre, gardant fort peu mémoire de notre chapitre à nous, n'est jamais aussi perceptible que dans les innombrables radiations d'une biographie qui cumule les nouveaux départs. Le même mouvement commande d'ailleurs les pulsations d'un récit qui redémarre à chaque fois en laissant le lecteur moitié déçu, moitié avide: car peut-être ne retrouvera-t-il jamais les siens, mais pourvu qu'on avance ... (LS 284-285).

The relationship between writing and the world, which turns the reader into a subject-in-process through reading, brings us back to the discussion about the Kristevan theory of sensory time. Here <<cette association de deux sensations qui jaillissent des signes pour me faire signe>> (1994, 209) is "a dynamics involving a destruction of the creative identity and

²¹ Kristeva, <<Le mot, le dialogue et le roman>>, in *Σημειωτική, Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, p. 146. See also her essay "The System and the Speaking Subject", in *The Kristeva Reader*, pp. 24-33, and her interview with Margaret Waller about "Intertextuality and Literary Interpretation", in which she conceives of the discovery of intertextuality at a formal level as that which leads her to "understand creative subjectivity as a kaleidoscope, a 'polyphony' as Bakhtin calls it", which she herself speaks of as a "subject in process" (1996, 190), in *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, pp. 188-203.

²² See Kristeva's interview with Elisabeth Bélorgey about her novel *Les Samouraïs*, in *L'Infini* 30 (1990), pp. 60-61.

reconstitution of a new plurality".²³ This relates the novel that embodies the Kristevan theory of an inter-textuality to Kristeva's *Sens et non-sens de la révolte*, in which she points out that <<le parcours de la mémoire [...] reprend alors la vision nietzschéenne d'un <éternel retour> et [...] permet un renouvellement du sujet tout entier>> (1996, 64).

By that, she means that

Répétition, perlaboration, élaboration sont des logiques qui, en apparence seulement, sont moins conflictuelles que la transgression, prennent des formes plus *soft* du déplacement de l'interdit comme retour du passé et renouvellement possible de l'espace psychique (1996, 64).

As transformative, the subject-in-process whom the course of memory produces is the double of the writer and of the reader engaged in an inter-textuality. This points to the subject-in-process as in a space that cannot be dissociated from time but proceeds in a different time sense from that of linear or historical time, which finds its expression in Kristeva's fictional representation of a space-time.

Describing the way in which the author of a story and the reader are in a temporal dimension that proceeds in a cyclical non-linear sense, Kristeva says through her fictional character Olga Morena, who likens time to <<<un enfant qui fait l'enfant, qui joue>>> (LS 258), in *Les Samouraïs*:

Perverse insouciance du jeu enfantin: le temps cyclique est comme elle, il nous lamine en nous amusant, mais cette boucle n'a pas de fin, car tous les jeux survivent à leurs joueurs et choisissent de nouveaux venus; les jeux structurent le monde, et il n'y a que des joueurs naïfs ou mégalomanes pour croire que ce sont eux qui le mènent (LS 258).

The idea that cyclical time is uncontrollable, like child's play, a loop which has no end, as Olga goes on to suggest, <<est une idée de mère>> (LS 259). By associating motherhood with cyclical time, Olga relates the novel to the novelist Kristeva's discussion about the relationship between space and time in <<Le temps des femmes>>. As Kristeva puts it in that essay, <<<Father's time, mother's species>, disait Joyce. C'est en effet à l'espace générateur de notre espèce humaine que l'on pense en évoquant le nom et le destin des femmes, davantage qu'au temps, au devenir ou à l'histoire>> (1993, 301). This view of space, which finds its expression in her fictional representation of cyclical time, is embodied in the concept of the feminine that is associated with the term French feminist theory.

As I have discussed earlier, the feminine is a textual woman that is a different type of language. Characterised by its motility, the feminine, for Kristeva, embodies a type of temporality that is cyclical and monumental, with which the modern feminist movement has identified. This is represented by what she calls a <<seconde phase>> of feminism, <<liée à

²³ Margaret Waller, "Intertextuality and Literary Interpretation", in *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, p. 190.

des femmes venues au féminisme après mai 1968, avec une expérience esthétique ou psychanalytique>> (1993, 307), in <<Le temps de femmes>>. These women, who are primarily interested in <<la spécificité de la psychologie féminine et ses réalisations symboliques>> (1993, 307), are reincarnated as an artist in her fictional representation of the May '68 episodes in *Les Samouraïs*; that artist is Martin Cazenave, whose painting is a representation of the feminine.

Taking the form of art that is non-verbal, the feminine enters the text of 68 as a transgression of the coded boundaries of syntax and grammar.²⁴ This relates the text of 68 to Kristeva's novel *Le vieil homme et les loups*, in which the image of Goya's painting, according to Anne-Marie Smith, has a place in the "transitional space between unrepresentable suffering and symbolisation".²⁵ By that, Smith refers to the fact that the novel is "written to symbolise and verbalise an ineffable loss, the loss of [the novelist's] father as a result of a medical experiment in an East European hospital".²⁶ In this sense, the "transitional space" is that which leads to verbalisation that consists of words and sensation. The idea of verbalisation further relates the novel to Kristeva's *Le temps sensible*, in which she analyses what she calls the dream of the second apartment, a term which is associated with the idea of a sensory cavern. The sensory cavern, says she, may be considered to be <<une part constituante de l'appareil psychique en tant qu'hétérogénéité>> if we, following Freud, read it from <<une perspective plutôt <économique>, et non pas évolutive ou stadiale>> (1994, 290). This means that <<L'appareil psychique est une signifiante stratifiée, que les impérialismes linguistique et cognitiviste ont tendance à occulter et à restreindre à la seule dimension du langage calqué sur l'Idée>> (1994, 290). When it is verbalised, the pre-verbal space inhabited by sensation finds its expression in words and images, which can also be applied to reading Kristeva's novel *Possessions*. In it, the transitional sensory space is inhabited by Picasso's painting <<La Femme à la collerette>> (P 122) which evokes the sensation of the brutalities of murder, of which the story of the heroine Gloria Harrison is the verbalisation. The interaction between words and sensation then relates the novel to Kristeva's two other novels *Les Samouraïs* and *Le vieil homme et les loups*, a connection which is established through the idea of painting as a representation of the feminine and therefore the embodiment of cyclical time.

The verbalisation of the paintings in *Les Samouraïs* expresses the feminist Carole Benedetti's view of her lover Martin's art:

Une force rythmée, une danse rituelle organisaient le chaos que Carole percevait dans son regard sauvage, bistre. Comme si la vision était un mur, Martin

²⁴ I shall return to this point in the next section.

²⁵ Smith, *Julia Kristeva: Speaking the Unspeakable*, p. 59.

²⁶ Ibid.

crevait sa membrane et, par-delà la pellicule de l'œil, sa toile s'animait, hantée d'un rire mortel. Comme un maître zen trouant un paravent d'un coup de bâton. Comme des balles de ping-pong dégringolant en pluie sonore du plafond. Comme les lampes de poche discrètes mais perçantes qui parsèment une nuit invisible, lui restituant son énergie. Pour faire comme Pollock et pour se faire comprendre de Carole, Martin aimait donner des noms mythiques à cette chorégraphie. *Hyène sous la lune*: sorcière sauvage, petite fille des femmes monstrueuses de De Kooning. *Homme et Femme nus aux couteaux*: coups de pinces musclés, baigneurs de Cézanne speedés au L.S.D. *Iphigénie ou Ériphile*: une femme sera sacrifiée, laquelle? Mystère d'ocre et de violet éclaboussé. *Daphné*: c'est pour moi (imaginait Carole), l'amante se métamorphose en laurier pour échapper à la poursuite d'Apollon.

Un laurier composé de rose et de vert montés en pyramide ondulante: l'œil éprouve l'essoufflement de la course, l'émeraude dorée, irisée, envahit non seulement la vue mais aussi l'odorat, l'image se fait parfum, Daphné est un brouillard insaisissable, une odeur de femme envoûtante et intouchable. Carole passe de l'autre côté de la rétine, dans un monde baudelairien où parfums, couleurs et sons se répondent [...] (LS 138).

The unrepresentable elements of Martin's paintings, which Carole verbalises through looking into his eye, are expressive of the concept of the feminine. The presence of the feminine then brings out the sensation of revolution in art, a sensation which is associated with the second phase of feminism in Kristeva's formulation of feminist history.

In relation to the representation of the feminine in *Les Samouraïs*, the unrepresentable elements of Goya's painting in *Le vieil homme et les loups* are verbalised through the Old Man's suffering that results from his encounter with the wolves. Here the wolves are symbolic of the evils of Eastern Europe; and Eastern Europe is the place where the double of the Old Man in reality, the novelist's father, died in a medical experiment.

That traumatic experience reminds the novelist of Goya's painting:

Car l'Espagnol fut sourd mais pas aveugle devant les stupidités, corruptions, révolutions, toute la gamme des cruautés plutôt stéréotypées des contemporains. Charlatanisme des savants et des intellectuels: rien n'a changé, je ne le vois que trop [...] Vénéralité des hommes de loi, avarice, culte des apparences, pots-de-vin et amnisties, tous pressés d'accéder à la presse, rien à penser, rien à dire, ignorance et bassesse de qui? – hommes d'affaires, banquiers, médecins, artistes, poètes, musiciens, peintres, vanité et frivolité des classes au pouvoir, mœurs relâchées, bêtise, répugnance des hors-la-loi, et corruption, corruption, corruption des magistrats, des députés, des médecins, des footballeurs, des industriels, des politiciens, j'en oublie certainement. *Voilà les hommes qui nous dévorent. Quel bon bec!* Il était déprimé, Goya? Je suis moi-même mourant, aigri, mélancolique, psychotique, irrécupérable. Et s'il fallait un point de non-retour pour être radical? (VH 118-119).

This verbalisation of Goya's painting conveys how pessimistic the novelist is about the world in which we live, of which melancholia and depression are the themes. The association of melancholia and depression with the concept of the feminine in turn relates Goya's painting to the fictional character Martin's action painting that embodies Martin's suffering in *Les*

Samouraïs.²⁷ The relationship between these representations of the feminine that is associated with maladies of the soul can also be related to Picasso's painting <<La Femme à la collerette>> in *Possessions* (P 122).

In other words, the representation of the feminine in *Possessions* is tied to the hopelessness of the world that manifests itself in violence. This is verbalised by the assistant to the captain of the police, Andrew Popov, in investigating the murder of the heroine Gloria Harrison in the novel. In his view, <<les femmes de Picasso m'ont toujours eu l'air sorties des mains d'un assassin. Des têtes tailladées posées sur une collerette comme sur un plateau. Le serial killer n'aura pas pu s'empêcher d'y voir une représentation de ses fantasmes>> (P 122). The deduction he makes from Picasso's painting points to maladies of the soul as the cause of violence; this relates Picasso's painting to the fictional character Martin's action painting in *Les Samouraïs* and Goya's painting in *Le vieil homme et les loups*.

The verbalisation of the paintings in the novels, in putting the feminine that is associated with cyclical and monumental time and that cannot be represented into words, also embodies what Kristeva calls a certain conception of time in <<Le temps des femmes>>. By that, she refers to a conception of time <<comme projet, téléologie, déroulement linéaire et prospectif: le temps du départ, du cheminement et de l'arrivée, le temps de l'histoire>> (1993, 304). This type of temporality is the time of language, of the enunciation of sentences (i.e. beginning and end), which is a representation of the Symbolic. Moreover, it is associated with the emergence of the women's movement as the <<combat des suffragettes ou de féministes existentialistes>> (1993, 306). As Kristeva explains,

Les revendications politiques des femmes, les luttes pour l'égalité des salaires et des fonctions, pour la prise du pouvoir dans les institutions sociales au même titre que les hommes, le rejet des attributs féminins ou maternels jugés incompatibles avec l'insertion dans cette histoire-là, relèvent de cette *logique d'identification* avec les valeurs non pas idéologiques (celles-ci sont combattues à juste titre comme réactionnaires) mais logiques et ontologiques de la rationalité propre à la nation et à l'État (1993, 306-307).

The logic of identification and spirited protest this current of feminism embraces has offered and still offers such benefits as <<avortement, contraception, égalité de salaire, reconnaissance professionnelle, etc.>> to women (1993, 307). This can be related to Anglo-American feminism, whose goal is to advance the cause of women's rights.

The association of Anglo-American feminism with the time of history can be used to address Kristeva's representation of the story of the feminist Carole Benedetti in *Les Samouraïs*. Like Anglo-American feminists, Carole approaches feminism from the perspective of Universal Woman in the text of 68. Her rejection of motherhood that is

²⁷ See the second chapter of this thesis, pp. 64-65.

incompatible with the logic of identification with “masculine” values further conveys the presence of the <<combat des suffragettes ou de féministes existentialistes>> (1993, 306). This attempt to fit in the linear time of planning and history is something which leads her lover Martin Cazenave to take up painting as a means of expressing their problematic love life. At this point the time of history embraces cyclical and monumental time, two types of temporality which are associated with female subjectivity. A discussion about the correlation between these two generations of feminist movements, which involves the debate between Anglo-American feminism and French feminist theory, shall bring this chapter to a conclusion.

The Gendering of Time

In Kristeva’s formulation of feminist history, the correlation between what she calls <<Deux générations>> of feminists is the source of the possible emergence of <<une troisième [génération]>> of women (1993, 306, 328); <<Le sens que revêt ici le terme <génération> implique en fin de compte moins une chronologie qu’un espace *signifiant*, un espace mental, corporel et désirant>> (1993, 328). As she puts it in <<Le temps des femmes>>,

Pour cette troisième génération que je revendique – que j’imagine? –, la dichotomie homme/femme en tant qu’opposition de deux entités rivales paraît appartenir à la *métaphysique*. Que veut dire <identité>, et même <identité sexuelle>, dans un espace théorique et scientifique où la notion même d’identité est remise en cause? Je n’insinue pas simplement une bisexualité qui, le plus souvent, trahit l’aspiration à la totalité, à un effacement de la différence. J’entends d’abord une dédramatisation de la <lutte à mort> entre les deux. Non pas au nom de leur réconciliation – le féminisme a eu au moins le mérite de faire apparaître ce qu’il y a d’irréductible et même de meurtrier dans le contrat social. Mais pour que sa violence opère avec le maximum d’intransigeance à l’intérieur de l’identité personnelle et sexuelle elle-même, et non par le rejet de l’autre (1993, 328-329).

The idea of <<génération>> as a signifying space consisting of the interaction between the masculine, with which the time of history is associated, and the feminine, with which cyclical and monumental time are associated, emphasises the concept of gender. Through the gendering of time, a fluid, free form of subjectivity able to integrate separation and difference comes into being.

This new generation of women who can break out of the binary logic of inclusion or exclusion from the male order embodies the possibility for a dialogue between Anglo-American feminists and the French feminists who are a product of the Anglo-American construction of French feminism. To integrate the difference between Anglo-American feminism and French feminist theory with a fluid, free subjectivity, the feminine, on which the work of the French feminists focuses, has to be inscribed in the order of language, into which Anglo-American feminists fit, in order to have an existence. At the same time the

feminine is made a challenge to or denial of the laws of the symbolic, which relegates it to the ineffable. As a result, there is no mastery in language but a vital heterogeneity: “the order of signification submitted to the transgressions, metaphors, metonymies, intonation, alliteration, sonority and accents of the semiotic”,²⁸ says Anne-Marie Smith in her reading of the Kristevan concept of feminist history. This vital heterogeneity of a fluid, free subjectivity, according to Tina Chanter, is embodied in “The success women have in combining motherhood with professional careers”, for that success is a composite of the two previous trends of feminism.²⁹ Yet, as Chanter has noted,

That success depends upon both provision of, for example, nurseries – institutions which recognize the specific needs of women as childbearers – and the effectiveness of equal opportunity policies – institutions which recognize the similarity between men and women.³⁰

Thus, a recognition of the two preconditions of that success – “each might be said to endorse opposing ideals for women” – as compatible is the key to the “third feminist attitude”.³¹

An example of what Chanter calls the “third feminist attitude” in Kristeva’s novels is the intellectual warrior Olga Morena’s view of motherhood as <<la forme courante de l’extase>> in *Les Samouraïs* (LS 410).³² This illustration of a harmony between “the specific needs of women as childbearers” and “the similarity between men and women” is supported by the description of Olga’s desire for motherhood as related to her intellectual project. In the scene in which she teaches her husband Hervé about the relationship between language and Chinese children in their trip around China, she suggests that <<tout petit Chinois est potentiellement un disciple du *Tao-tö king*: il se nourrit de sa mère comme des mots chantés, la musique lie le lait au langage>> (LS 255-256). Unlike <<le petit Français, Anglais, Russe>> (LS 255), who enters into a fundamental relation with language at the age of two years, a Chinese infant is involved in the speech system at the age of six months:

[Il] est éduqué et poli par les symboles depuis le lait maternel et avec le lait maternel. Son corps à corps de bébé avec sa mère, il est apte à le parler en le chantant, si vous voulez; il ne l’enterre pas en attendant de s’exprimer à l’âge d’un ou deux ans (LS 255).

This study of the difference between a Chinese infant and a French, English, Russian infant in learning language leads Olga to the idea of having a child with Hervé when she kisses Chinese children at a Shanghai maternity hospital:

²⁸ Smith, “Transgression, Transubstantiation, Transference”, *Paragraph* 20, 3 (1997), p. 278.

²⁹ Chanter, “Female Temporality and the Future of Feminism”, in *Abjection, Melancholia and Love: The Work of Julia Kristeva*, p. 71.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Compare this point with my discussion about “The Discourse of Maternity” in Kristeva’s novels in the next chapter.

- Tu en fais trop. Tu sais bien qu'en Chine on embrasse un enfant seulement quand il dort. (Hervé.)
- Il n'y a rien de plus émouvant qu'un enfant ... chinois. (Olga.)
- Si, deux enfants. (Hervé.)
- J'en veux un. (Olga.)
- ... (Hervé.)
- C'est vrai. (Olga.)
- Toi? (Hervé.)
- Moi. (Olga.)
- ... (Hervé.)
- Et toi? (Olga.)
- L'idée paraît esthétiquement intéressante. Vue de loin. (Hervé.)
- Moi, je la verrais bien de près. (Olga.)
- Laisse-moi t'embrasser. (Hervé.)
- Je suis sérieuse. Très. (Olga.)
- On a tout le temps. (Hervé) (LS 256-257).

Although Hervé is not interested in being a father, he becomes a father when Olga decides that the time has come for him to be a father: <<Rapide, décidé, fidèle. Depuis la Chine au moins, [Hervé] savait qu'Olga en avait très envie. Une grossesse est la plus absolue des complicités>> (LS 411). The implication that motherhood is natural for a woman, who, in this case, is a professional, relates the concept of the gendering of time to the problematics of a woman's desire to be a mother; this desire is the object of analysis in the next chapter.

In this chapter, the idea of a "third feminist attitude" embodies the theme of part two of this thesis: sex and text. Through the intellectual warrior Olga Morena in *Les Samouraïs*, the political demands of women who struggle to have the same opportunities as men have and who reject feminine or maternal traits are answered:

- Olga est proche de Lauzun et de Saïda, mais beaucoup plus morale, historique et subjective, approuvait Cédric.
 - Elle parle comme une femme, en perte et régénérescence perpétuelles.
- (Carole essayait de rapprocher Olga des féministes révolutionnaires) (LS 146).

This dialogue between Cédric and Carole, who are Olga's fellow students, resembles Olga and existential feminists who advocate the similarity between men and women. At the same time it also resembles Olga and revolutionary feminists who, in Kristeva's words, are primarily interested in <<la spécificité de la psychologie féminine et ses réalisations symboliques>> (1993, 307). For Olga <<parle comme une femme>> who is a writing-effect consisting of the interaction between <<perte et régénérescence>> as its subjects (LS 146). The combination of second phase feminism and first phase feminism in the image of Olga as an intellectual warrior further destabilises the debate between French feminist theory and Anglo-American feminism. This makes Olga a fluid, free subjectivity able to integrate difference, a result which is implicated in the gendering of time.

V

MATERNITY

Si elle avait eu un enfant, elle lui aurait donné sans cesse
des câlins et des claques. Mais elle n'en avait pas.
Julia Kristeva, *Le vieil homme et les loups*

Maternity, for Stéphanie Delacour in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, is a means to assuage a woman's anger and anguish over a broken marriage. In her view, the reason her friend Alba Ram ages so early is that she has not had a child to share the weariness that results from her fight with her husband Vespasien. This view of maternity, as some feminists would suggest, is polluted by traditional Western logic of binary opposition that associates woman *qua* mother with nature and the body in opposition to culture and the mind.¹ At the same time, however, the visions Stéphanie has of how Alba <<lui aurait donné sans cesse des câlins et des claques>> (VH 81) if Alba were to have a child expresses women's desire for motherhood, although that desire to care for the other involves acts of violence. By recognising the specific needs of women as child-bearers, Stéphanie challenges the feminist attitude towards maternity and reproduction, issues which are indicative of the fact that men denigrate the status of women. Rather than neglecting or denying patriarchal images of maternity, which have traditionally been used to oppress women, Stéphanie re-invokes these images to illustrate the reality of sexual difference.

Given the institution of marriage as that which provides an entry into re-conceiving maternity and reproduction, the first section of this chapter examines the relationships between men and women in Kristeva's novels. At issue in this discussion about the implications of the institution of marriage is the idea of mental violence, for which the violent love story of Alba and Vespasien in *Le vieil homme et les loups* serves as a starting point. The analysis of the way in which Kristeva represents love stories will be related to the argument that the characters in her novels possess the function of reflecting social realities, from which a discourse of maternity emerges.

The second section of this chapter addresses the problematics of Kristeva's discourse of maternity, in which woman is a concept, a possibility of a different idea. This lies in an understanding of her theorisation of new tales of the Virgin Mary in <<Stabat Mater>> in *Histoires d'amour*, with which her fictional representation of the pregnant women Olga Morena in *Les Samouraïs* and Gloria Harrison in *Possessions* has close parallels. In exploring the correlation between her theory of maternity and her fictional representation of

¹ See footnote 24 in the introduction to part two of this thesis, p. 111.

it, a comparison can also be made between her new tales of the Virgin Mary and the French feminist theorist Luce Irigaray's; both rewrite Freud's family romance.² Through an analysis of these new tales of the Virgin Mary, a new ethics of maternity, which I shall call a her/ethics, can then be formulated.

The last section of this chapter focuses on the idea of a her/ethics of maternity by re-conceptualising Gayatri Spivak's theory of "ethics [as] the experience of the impossible"³ in the context of Kristeva's representation of mother-child relationships in her novels. The question to be asked as a basis for this discussion is: what amounts to being a good enough mother?⁴ An answer to this question is the object-relations theorists D. W. Winnicott's and Nancy Chodorow's suggestion that a good enough mother should be able to "know" what her infant "needs" and to fulfil it,⁵ a suggestion which has profoundly influenced feminist and psychoanalytic accounts of mothering. This, however, appears to be subjective to Kristeva, who asks – through her fictional character St  phanie Delacour –, who has the right to set the criteria for "determining failure and success"⁶ with regards to being a good enough mother? To answer this question, a new understanding of maternity is needed, which has to do with Kristeva's representation of love stories in her novels.

The War Between the Sexes

As we have learned from the narrator St  phanie Delacour in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, a characteristic of love stories in Kristeva's novels is violence. An example of this is the fight to the death between the couple Alba Ram and Vespasien in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, a situation which leaves in their marriage nothing but boredom and hatred:

- Le travail. (Vespasien.)
- Le pouvoir. (Alba.)
- Exactement. (Vespasien.)
- Alors, l'ennui. (Alba.)
- C'est quoi? (Vespasien.)
- Quand il est impossible de penser le mot <<ensemble>>. (Alba.)
- Il y a pire. (Vespasien.)
- La haine (Alba.) (VH 62).

² For a discussion about how Freud constitutes the story of the mother as feminine and every infant masculine and one cannot love the same as its self from the point of view of the Madonna, see, for instance, Mary Bittner Wiseman, "Renaissance Paintings and Psychoanalysis: Julia Kristeva and the Function of the Mother", in *Ethics, Politics, and Difference in Julia Kristeva's Writing*, pp. 92-96.

³ Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (eds), *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, p. 270.

⁴ Janice Doane and Devon Hodges in *From Klein to Kristeva: Psychoanalytic Feminism and the Search for the "Good Enough" Mother* and Christine Everingham in *Motherhood and Modernity*, for instance, have asked the same question.

⁵ See D. W. Winnicott, "A Man Looks at Motherhood", and Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*.

⁶ Sara Ruddick, "Maternal Thinking", in *Rethinking the Family*, p. 77.

The violent relationship between Alba and Vespasien can be linked to Joëlle Cabarus's view of love stories in *Les Samourais*, that is, <<Il n'y a plus d'histoires d'amour>> (LS 9). The death of love stories also finds its expression in the heroine Gloria Harrison's failure to save her marriage to the artist Stanislas Novak in *Possessions*, which makes the word "together" that is symbolic of love in Alba's quarrel with Vespasien unthinkable in the matrimonial world of Kristeva's novels.

Although the suggestion that couples in Kristeva's novels perform the war between the sexes disregards the passionate love story of Olga Morena and Hervé Sinteuil, the quiet marital life of Joëlle and Arnaud Cabarus, and the seemingly happy marriage of Rosalind Bergman and Edward Dalloway in *Les Samourais*, none of these discourses of love gives a picture of eternal love. Compared with the cluster of couples, whose marriages are shadowed by domestic violence, in discourses of the war between the sexes, the "happy" couples invoke Alba Ram's statement <<Quand il est impossible de penser le mot <ensemble>>> (VH 62) by substituting infidelity for commitment to the law of monogamy. The similarity between the peaceful side and the violent side of the institution of marriage points to marriage as incompatible with love. When love becomes hatred, violence makes inroads into the institution of marriage; and when the word "together" becomes unthinkable, discourses of adultery replace discourses of love. Violence and adultery are thus the themes we shall look at in discussing Kristeva's fictional representation of love stories.

Thinking about the relationship between violence and the institution of marriage from a feminist perspective, images of wife-beating that leads to killing at times and of domestic enslavement that forms the sad history of women's oppression come to mind. Yet violence does not always present itself in terms of physical assault. As the verbal dispute between Alba and Vespasien in *Le vieil homme et les loups* reminds us, violence transpires also as thought. In what could be seen as the discourse of the war between Alba and Vespasien, namely, chapter 3, *Anamorphoses*, in the novel, Alba's wound results not so much from waiting for a blow from Vespasien as from his words that seek only to hurt.

Assuming the role of the breadwinner of the family, Vespasien, after he married Alba, <<se plaisait désormais à maintenir un mariage qui lui donnait le rôle exquis du protecteur qui piétine la proie de sa charité>> (VH 46). More often than not, we see him perverting his economic power, brainwashing Alba into the belief that she is dependent on him. He says to Alba after disputing with her about the disappearance of her parents, <<C'est moi qui te nourris, si tu veux bien le noter, qui te sers d'alibi, de couverture>> (VH 47). Unwilling to accept the fact that she has lost all her charm for Vespasien, Alba meditates, <<Pensait-il ce qu'il disait? La langue échappe à la réflexion, jamais à la passion: la parole est toujours d'une pensée injustement vraie>> (VH 48). Her turning to cooking as a

means of convincing herself that Vespasien loves her further buttresses the stereotyped image of man as the master and woman as the slave of the family: <<Vespasien mangeait avec une gloutonnerie animale, penché au ras de son assiette et émettant d'indiscernables grommellements en guise de compliments [...] Cela lui suffisait pour se dire qu'après tout, Vespasien l'aimait>> (VH 51). The assumption she makes about the way Vespasien responds to her cooking turns her position as subordinate to him in her relationship with him around; serving food is thus a token of a woman's power.

Here the ideology of the kitchen as the place where a woman can reassure herself about her value can be viewed in the context of what Hélène Cixous calls <<oppositions duelles, hiérarchisées>> in <<Sorties>> in *La jeune née* (1975, 116). By that, Cixous refers to how <<La pensée a toujours travaillé par opposition>> which is hierarchised, and <<La hiérarchisation soumet à l'homme toute l'organisation conceptuelle>> (1975, 116, 117). Privileged, man is (at) the origin, which marginalises woman. She, according to Cixous, may be nonexistent, since she does not enter the oppositions. This violence against woman, which Cixous has attempted to deconstruct in her study of classical philosophical and psychoanalytic thought, is the source of women's oppression and is internalised by women themselves as well. At this point Cixous's exploration into the issue of ideology can be related to Kristeva's fictional representation of women and, ironically, men as victims of masculinist definition of sexual difference.

The heroine Alba in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, for instance, believes that <<Restait la cuisine, l'art naturel de ceux qu'on utilise et qu'on oublie tout aussi naturellement>> (VH 50). This understanding of the connection between cooking and women in her attempt to rekindle her relationship with her husband Vespasien is indicative of the workings of the Cixousian concept of the binary oppositions. Not only is masculinist definition of sexual difference present in the description of cooking as women's duties, but also it dominates the scene in which motherhood is explored in the context of the possible fulfilment of womanhood, in Kristeva's novels. Motherhood is the theme of the war between the feminist Carole Benedetti and her lover Martin Cazenave, who could not understand why Carole would refuse his proposal to have a child with her, in *Les Samouraïs*:

Cette idée de bébé le rendait à la fois heureux et un peu taré. <Je deviens gâteaux, mais qu'importe>, se disait-il quand la raison banale le reprenait. Puis il se laissait de nouveau porter par la frénésie de ce rêve. Il n'avait que Carole pour le partager. Enfin, il avait osé lui parler, pourquoi refusait-elle, c'était si naturel, si évident. Se serait-il trompé sur elle, elle n'était donc pas aussi extraordinaire qu'il l'avait cru, quelque chose d'essentiel lui échappait? (LS 122).

The implication that women would not reject motherhood reflects the arbitrariness of masculinist definition of sexual difference, a characteristic which contains violence against

women by depriving them of autonomy. This violence is strengthened in Kristeva's fictional representation of a woman as the Other to a man.⁷

The role of a woman as the Other to a man is played by the heroine Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*, who is nothing but a pretty doll in her monotonous marital life with her husband Stanislas Novak. As her friend Stéphanie Delacour tells us,

[...] Gloria, n'arrêtait pas de l'interroger, lui [i.e. Stan], sur l'univers si mystérieux et si prestigieux de l'art, mais ses questions paraissaient au peintre toujours incongrues, déplacées, naïves, d'autant plus que Gloria s'avancait avec cette voix claironnante de directrice de chorale qu'elle prenait pour braver la petite fille apeurée tapie en elle. Stan n'avait pas le temps de déchiffrer ces va-et-vient et, tout à sa vocation, jugeait Gloria indiscreète, bruyante, insupportable (P 47).

What underlies this passage, it seems, is the idea of Man as Form and Woman as Matter, since Gloria projects an image of irrationality. The fact that she embodies the violence against woman Cixous points out in her explanation of the concept of the binary oppositions in turn relates Gloria to Martin and Alba in the above discussion about Kristeva's fictional characters as victims of masculinist definition of sexual difference. Through them, the novelist as a woman produces a sense of ambivalence in her feminist readers. Some may find that this counter-representation of women runs the risk of reinforcing women's subordinate position, whereas others may argue that by seeing how hierarchized binary oppositions shape the culture of violence against women, we are on the way to unsettling it.

Given this, the question of how we can weigh literary representations of violence against women on the same scale as domestic violence remains. This refers us to the argument that the characters in Kristeva's novels possess the function of reflecting social realities, which we shall approach in terms of the theme of evil here. One of the characters who embodies the evils of contemporary society is the army surgeon Vespasien in *Le vieil homme et les loups*. The way in which psychic life is blocked, inhabited, and destroyed in his world finds its expression in the mania he has for wealth, power and position.⁸ That mania leads him to translate <<sa philosophie en s'acharnant, sans se gêner, à réaliser ses humeurs les plus impératives, ses ambitions les plus intransigeantes>> (VH 46). The result of his self-destructive behaviour is that he turns into a wolf man, which brings extreme violence on his wife Alba. The passion he feels for Alba is taken over by its lurking element of hatred when he becomes a wolf man. All that is left with him is <<cette torsion des cellules et des mots qui n'aspirent qu'à faire mal, à tuer, car ils ne s'attardent sur aucune intériorité>>

⁷ For literary criticism concerns with analysing the representations of women in visual and verbal texts, which is often part of a sexual-political critique, see, for instance, Josephine Donovan (ed), *Feminist Literary Theory: Explorations in Theory*.

⁸ See my discussion about the relationship between melancholia and mania in the second chapter of this thesis, p. 70.

(VH 56).⁹ Their professor, the Old Man, envisages that this violence will end in murder: <<Le meurtre. Cela devait se terminer par un meurtre. Le Vieil Homme n'osait y penser, mais il le redoutait de plus en plus. C'était évident>> (VH 58).

Alba concurs with the Old Man's vision of Vespasien's murderous tendency later in her conversation with her friend Stéphanie Delacour: <<Je t'assure. Il est devenu d'une telle ..., disons d'une telle sincérité! Surtout après avoir bu. Il dit qu'il me hait et qu'il me tuera. Vespasien est bizarre, mais il ne ment jamais>> (VH 86). The power of words, which causes a woman to live in fear of violence, is associated with the horrors of actual crime when the body of a drowned woman is recovered from the lake. For the unidentified woman has remarkable likeness to Alba: <<Les longs cheveux cuivrés commencent à sécher sous l'appel de la chaleur. Les cheveux d'Alba couverts d'algues et de vase [...]>> (VH 90). Through the resemblance between them, a relationship between physical and mental violence against women can be established. More importantly, the murder of the unidentified woman is evidence of the barbarities of the city Santa Barbara, which leads into the question of the body as signification.¹⁰

In relation to the war between the sexes, the body as signification that refers to the barbarities of the city Santa Barbara is embodied in Gloria Harrison's corpse in *Possessions*. As I have discussed in the third chapter of this thesis, the murder of Gloria bears witness to the death of civilisation. The fact that Santa Barbara is barbaric is reflected in the inhabitants of that city's suffering, of which Gloria's killer Pauline Gadeau is representative. What provokes Pauline into cutting off Gloria's head without any thought but hateful ones is Gloria's affair with Michael Fish, a relationship which turns Gloria into an undisciplined hysterical woman who puts her own pleasure before her son Jerry's future. At this point the body as signification, which is implicated in the mother-child relationship, is related to the war between the sexes. Through the narrator Stéphanie Delacour, we learn the tempestuous life of Gloria and Michael: <<Voilà combien de temps que Gloria Harrison et son amant en sont arrivés aux cris, peut-être même aux coups, oubliant que Pauline et Jerry travaillent juste au-dessus et que l'orthophoniste, sinon l'élève, entend tout?>> (P 265). Responding to her lover's shrill and implacable voice demanding her to send her handicapped son to Switzerland, <<Gloria pleure, refuse, promet de tout arranger, de faire ce que veut Fish, tout, sans exception, pourvu qu'il reste auprès d'elle, lui, Fish>> (P 265). This image of Woman as weaker than Man brings us back to the idea of Kristeva's discourses of the war between

⁹ For an account of how the power of language works on the bodies, see, for instance, Monique Wittig, "The Mark of Gender", *Feminist Issues* 5, 2 (1985), pp. 3-4.

¹⁰ Compare this point with my discussion about the relationship between the body and the city in the next chapter.

the sexes as a fictional representation of the Cixousian concept of the binary oppositions. The correlation between masculinist definition of sexual difference and the war between Gloria and Michael is further complicated by the question of motherhood.

Jerry as a stumbling block to Gloria's affair with Michael points to domestic violence as both against woman and child, with which Gloria's marriage with Stanislas Novak has close parallels. Stanislas neglects Gloria, and is not a responsible father, either:

Il n'avait jamais voulu être père, jugeant la fonction inesthétique, et n'était nullement persuadé qu'il avait quoi que ce soit en commun avec le malheureux nourrisson. Celui-ci semblait souffrir atrocement, en dissonance complète avec cette aisance que respire l'œuvre d'un vrai artiste dont la nature désinvolte et heureuse n'est pas faite pour les épreuves de l'existence. Jamais désir de femme et projet d'homme ne lui parurent aussi incompatibles que face au petit bonhomme (P 67).

The idea that women's desires for motherhood are not compatible with men's ambitions reiterates patriarchal conception of maternity and reproduction, which relates the story of Stanislas and Gloria to that of Martin Cazenave and Carole Benedetti in *Les Samouraïs*. Like Stanislas, Martin considers motherhood a natural compensation for women. This approach to motherhood also characterises Stéphanie Delacour's understanding of mother-child relationship in *Le vieil homme et les loups*. With Stéphanie, motherhood is a solution to the problem of a broken marriage, an idea which, in demonstrating the importance of women's biological function as bearers of children, is contaminated with masculinist definition of sexual difference.

The masculinist view of the female body as destined to procreation and nursing makes many feminists wary of emphasizing the mother or the maternal function. As, for instance, the feminist thinker Simone de Beauvoir writes in *Le Deuxième Sexe*,

Il y a une fonction féminine qu'il est actuellement presque impossible d'assumer en toute liberté, c'est la maternité; [...] Si l'idée d'insémination artificielle intéresse tant les femmes, ce n'est pas qu'elles souhaitent éviter l'étreinte mâle: c'est qu'elles espèrent que la maternité libre va enfin être admise par la société (1955, 539).

Her view of maternity can be looked at in conjunction with the feminist Carole Benedetti's politics of motherhood in Kristeva's novel *Les Samouraïs*.

As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, Carole regards her relationship with Martin as a joke because what he really wants is a baby machine, whereas Martin suspects that she takes the pill to conceal the fact that she is barren. In reply to Martin's <<Tu serais bien la seule femme à ne pas vouloir d'enfant. Qu'est-ce qui te prend? Il n'y a qu'avec toi que je désire en faire un>>, Carole says, <<Tu te trompes. Tu as peut-être remarqué qu'aujourd'hui les femmes ne pensent plus seulement à devenir mères de famille?>>

(LS 122) These other things besides motherhood, in which women of 1968 were interested, keep on finding ways to improve the image of the female body as a response to feminists' dissatisfaction at the masculinist definition of the female body as so <<débile, impuissant et handicapé>> (LS 132). The "right to control our own bodies"¹¹ as such was a basic premise shared by feminists of 1968, for which Carole's rejection of motherhood provides an example. Yet Carole's method of avoiding male power over women by retaining fertility (women's power) but rejecting fertilisation (men's power) contributes only partially to the interpretation of women's right to control their own bodies.

Apart from locating the issues of abortion and contraception "in the context of women's sexuality in a critique of heterosexual relations",¹² anti-motherhood, says Claire Duchen, is entangled in the fight for "free, legal abortion on demand, and the diffusion of information about, and free availability to all women of contraception".¹³ All of this encapsulates women's social and sexual submission, economic and emotional dependence on men. To legalise abortion, which "concentrated in an extreme way all the various aspects of the specific oppression of women",¹⁴ is thus needed. This feminist politics of motherhood, which the Women's Movement in post-war France promoted, is interpreted differently in Kristeva's discourse on the war between the sexes.

As is clear in Carole's war with Martin, her pro-abortion attitude is not caused by her own experience of being oppressed, but by her parents' hapless marriage. She expresses her view of the implications of motherhood and the institution of marriage through her friend Olga Morena,

Sa mère aurait dû avorter, tuer le bébé Carole. Elle aurait préféré être morte plutôt que servir de liaison artificielle entre un mannequin écervelé et un banquier distrait. Jamais d'enfant. Elle prendrait autant de pilules qu'il le faudrait, avorterait trente-six fois, et si un enfant voyait quand même le jour après tout cela, Carole se sentait bien capable de le noyer, de le jeter dans un ravin, n'importe quoi serait moins criminel que le crime de sa mère qui l'avait eue à froid, comme on ouvre un compte en banque (LS 123).

Given this, the right of women to control their own bodies is not a question arising from the pressures to conform to the social norm of motherhood within marriage but a question

¹¹ Claire Duchen, *Feminism in France: From May '68 to Mitterrand*, p. 51.

¹² Ibid., p. 57.

¹³ Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁴ From Danièle Léger's comment on many of the 343 well-known women who signed the Manifesto in *Le Nouvel Observateur* (April 5, 1971) have not actually aborted, in *Contraception et avortement* (CNRS, 1979), p. 104. According to Duchen, this is an excellent, perceptive analysis of the press coverage of the abortion and contraception issues. See "Manifesto of the 343" (<<Un appel de 343 femmes>>), in *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, p. 190.

informed by the problematic relationship between the mother and the daughter.¹⁵ Carole's mother as not good enough reminds us of Gloria Harrison, whom Pauline Gadeau considers an undisciplined mother, in *Possessions*.¹⁶

As if to suggest that a feminist analysis of motherhood has failed to take negligent mothers into account, Rosalind Bergman in *Les Samourais* gives another example of being not good enough as a mother. Making her appearance as a wonderful mother in her seemingly happy marriage to Edward Dalloway, Rosalind later deserts her husband and children and goes to live in Jerusalem after she meets Isaac Chemtov. When Edward telephones her for an explanation of why she has left them, Rosalind or Ruth Goldenberg, as she names herself, speaks in an emotionless tone about her decision:

- [...] Tu es amoureuse de cet Isaac? (Dalloway.)
- Ce n'est pas du tout le problème. (Goldenberg.)
- Enfin, tu as toujours été une femme surprenante, Rosy, c'est pour cela que je t'aime, tu sais. Tu m'expliqueras tout cela à la maison. Nous t'attendons, avec Jason et Patricia qui sont allés passer le dimanche chez tes parents. Tu arrives samedi prochain à deux heures? (Dalloway.)
- Samedi, c'est shabbat, je rentrerai lundi (Goldenberg.) (LS 323).

While the novelist does not indicate the impact of Rosalind's irresponsibility on Patricia, this discourse of "Mother Who Leaves" may reproduce another discourse of anti-motherhood. The problematic mother-daughter relationship reflects how a certain kind of feminism idealises women's oppression,¹⁷ since women themselves are influenced by their own sex as well. The irresponsible mothers in the novels thus embody a counterbalance to the feminist attitude towards patriarchal conception of maternity and reproduction. Yet, are they not subject to ethics?¹⁸

That question also applies to their daughters, who may reject or have rejected motherhood. The feminist Carole Benedetti's insistence on abortion in revenge for her mother's irresponsibility in *Les Samourais*, for instance, raises the ethical question of foetal

¹⁵ See Adrienne Rich's discussion of mother-daughter relationship in *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*.

¹⁶ Janice Doane and Devon Hodges in their discussion about the maternal role from Klein to Winnicott say that "In custody battles, experts now debate whether or not women are 'good enough' mothers and Winnicott's way of positioning the mother's responsibilities have encouraged the view that 'good' mothers find 'their whole self' at home with children", in *From Klein to Kristeva: Psychoanalytic Feminism and the Search for the "Good Enough" Mother*, p. 31.

¹⁷ See Sara Mills and Lynne Pearce's discussion of radical feminism which "believes that patriarchy alone is the root of women's oppression, and that resistance must take the form of a radical dismantling of the patriarchal system" in *Feminist Readings/ Feminists Reading*, p. 312.

¹⁸ I shall discuss this question in the last section of this chapter.

rights.¹⁹ In contradistinction to Carole's feminist politics of abortion, which in its extreme form rejects heterosexuality altogether, Stéphanie Delacour in *Possessions* has an involuntary abortion. For Stéphanie, <<le sexe n'avait jamais été du viol [...] quoi qu'eussent pu prétendre ses amies féministes au nom de l'humanité, ou plutôt au nom de la féminité>> (P 172). Hence, when she has to have a therapeutic abortion as a consequence of suffering from <<toxoplasmose>>, <<Il avait fallu [...] tout l'orgueil et l'addiction au travail d'une Stéphanie Delacour pour se remettre de ce carnage>> (P 174). This <<accouchement de rien>> buries memories of the islands, Corfu, Corsica, Martinique and the Ile de Ré, where Stéphanie's greatest experiences of passion have taken place, in bowls in the clinic or preserved for use in biotechnology (P 174). The aborted child as the embodiment of love that is implicated in the issues of rape and single motherhood does not present itself as a victim of a woman's fight for the right to control her own body but of illness. This problematises the question of whether abortion is humane or not and pits Stéphanie against Carole.

While Carole chooses not to have sex as a method of contraception, Stéphanie considers sex fulfilment of womanhood. As she reminisces about her relationship with him, <<Lui la comblant partout, sable, sel et sperme amalgamés>> (P 173). The aborted child as a product-to-be of them who are not married can be said to be a product-to-be of illegitimate sex if not rape in opposition to legitimate sex in the institution of marriage. The implication that female sexuality can involve practicing morally unacceptable sexual act, which is related to rape, poses a challenge to the feminist belief of rape as an abuse of power.²⁰ Here, for Stéphanie, rape is the opposite of sex but not necessary an act to condemn. In this way, her perceptions of the relationship between rape and sex liken her to Joëlle Cabarus, who calls for sexual liberation, in *Les Samourais*.²¹ The association of sexual liberation with rape, for most feminists, however, dismisses the helplessness, voicelessness, paralysis, frigidity and trauma concomitant of rape, which is real violence against women. On the other hand, the right of women to control their own bodies embedded in this approach to sex poses a problem to patriarchal images of the female body as so <<débile, impuissant et handicapé>> (LS 132). Such an ironic way of furthering the image of the female body, a campaign which women of

¹⁹ Janice Doane and Devon Hodges observe in *From Klein to Kristeva: Psychoanalytic Feminism and the Search for the "Good Enough" Mother* that "More recently, the concept of 'maternal environment' has been extended – to protect not just the best interest of infants and children, but also '[foetal] rights' and even the rights of children not yet conceived – all at the expense of the mother, whose own expression of self-interest, no matter how limited, is perceived to be a hostile act of aggression against her infant" (1992, 31). See also Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, for a discussion of this contemporary phenomenon.

²⁰ See, for instance, <<Le viol est un abus de pouvoir>>, *Le quotidien des femmes*, May 3, 1975.

²¹ See my discussion about the text of the French Revolution in the previous chapter, pp. 119-120.

1968 launched, changes the theme of Kristeva's discourses of the war between the sexes from violence against women to violence and women.

Rather than refusing the idea of violence against women, Stéphanie's body embraces it, something which, while risky, runs counter to the patriarchal view of the female body as the Object in the issues of rape and sex. As she suggests in her reaction to her feminist friends' belief that sex is rape,

Jamais. [Le sexe n'avait jamais été du viol.] Au contraire: secret, ivre, velouté. Cœur gorgé de sang dans un portrait de béguine. Fleurs offertes au ciel sous le pinceau de Georgia O'Keefe. Fragrances devenues tactiles dans les pages de Colette. Stéphanie savait reconnaître dans les œuvres des autres ce plaisir sans nom que lui donnaient, à elle, les hommes. Et qu'elle aimait préserver, voilé, insulaire (P172).

The fact that Stéphanie experiences nameless pleasure men give her in her relationships with them associates her with the image of a whore, who embodies women's potential of being active in fulfilling their sexual desire. Despite its connotations of the female body as unclean, liberty of female sexuality allows Stéphanie to present the female body as not so <<débile, impuissant et handicapé>> (LS 132), thereby becoming a means of combating violence against the female body associated with the patriarchal view of it.

The relationship between violence and women is also illustrated by the image of a virago, of which the heroine Alba Ram in *Le vieil homme et les loups* is the embodiment. As is clear in her war with her husband Vespasien, she has not been defeated in the face of Vespasien's destructive, murderous tendencies.²² She imagines that <<Elle enfonce ses doigts dans les yeux du perfide, arrache les globes de leurs cavités, y plonge les mains et, souillée du sang du criminel, elle creuse, non pas l'œil dont il ne reste plus de trace, mais la place de l'œil>> (VH 57). This extreme violence that can be seen as a reaction to violence against women brings forth revolutionary aspirations, which can be compared with the feminist Carole Benedetti's war with her lover Martin Cazenave in *Les Samouraïs*. Like Alba, Carole fights against violence by resorting to violence. This is embodied in her attempt to dismantle the Wadani myths that symbolise extreme violence against women.

As Martin tells us in his report on his experience of living with the Wadanis, <<Le sperme est la force suprême>> in Wadani society:

Pendant des mois, le jeune marié nourrit sa jeune épouse de sperme, jusqu'à ce qu'elle soit devenue assez forte pour être fécondée. Le lait des femmes – autre substance magique – est considéré comme une simple transformation, par la centrifugeuse-femme, de ce sperme mâle qu'elle a absorbé (LS 107).

Maternity and reproduction in this discourse of the war between the sexes demonstrates women's sexual submission, physically and mentally. Carole's going off to dismantle the

²² See also Kristeva, <<Roman noir et temps présent>>, *L'Infini* 37 (1992), pp. 82-83.

Wadani myths thus unwittingly involves a radical feminist politics of motherhood or the right to control women's own bodies. Through this, she is able to get back in touch with the sacred that is associated with the image of her as the Virgin in the text of 68.²³ The association of her with the Virgin Mary, coupled with the image of Stéphanie as Eve, who represents "wayward desires",²⁴ likens the theme of violence and women in Kristeva's novels to a religious discourse that, for Kristeva, is the "revelation" of the unrepresentable *chora*.²⁵

In terms of Stéphanie's wayward desires that answer Joëlle Cabarus's call for sexual liberation, they are symbolic of the spirit of adultery in Kristeva's presentation of the war between the sexes. For the wives in all the "happy" couples, whom I have mentioned at the beginning of this section, find it difficult to conform to the law of monogamy, through which they advance the cause of the right of women to dispose of their own bodies. At the same time, however, this call for sexual liberation is unacceptable to social mores, which points to the fact that the workings of society are contaminated with masculinist ideology. As is evident in the case of Rosalind Bergman or Ruth Goldenberg's adulterous relationship with Isaac Chemtov, both Dr. and Mrs. Bergman consider their daughter insane:

Pour sa part, le docteur Bergman pensa à une phase maniaque de la dépression endémique que sa fille cachait si bien, mais dont un père n'est jamais dupe: on essaiera de soigner ça. Mme Bergman fut la plus ébranlée et la plus sceptique [...]. Bref, sa mère avait peur de trop bien comprendre Rosy, tout en estimant que cette décision prétendument lucide était une folie ou, du moins, un malentendu (LS 324).

A double standard is implied in this equation of the adulteress with the psychotic, which the Dalloway grandparents' silence echoes: <<entre gens bien élevés on ne fait pas de commentaires>> (LS 324). This is reinforced by the story of Edward Dalloway, who has not undergone unfavourable comment from society on his love affair with Olga Morena. On the contrary, Olga, like Rosalind, is portrayed as a seductress in her encounter with Edward: <<Elle posa sa tête sur son épaule et se laissa embrasser>> (LS 300). This bias against women in defining the word immorality conveys the influence masculinist ideology has on social and cultural production.

The violence of masculinist discourse of female sexuality finds its expression in the writer Hervé Sinteuil's resonant <<suis ton désir>> in *Les Samourais* (LS 295-297). Here Hervé is in conversation with his wife Olga before she leaves Paris for New York, where she will fulfil her wish to lecture. Yet when she is in New York, she follows her desire for sexual liberation and has an affair with Edward Dalloway. Her understanding of Hervé's

²³ See my discussion about the text of 68 in the previous chapter, pp. 120-121.

²⁴ Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*, p. 83. Here she is discussing Kristeva's holy mothers.

²⁵ I shall develop this point further in the following section.

<<suis ton désir>> thus likens her to the whores Stéphanie and Joëlle in the above discussion of women's autonomy. These women who liberate their wayward desires embody Luce Irigaray's concept of <<la femme [qui] a des sexes un peu partout>>,²⁶ which the patriarchy cannot control. Their bodies as a site of turning patriarchy against itself are also related to the issues of maternity and reproduction, since none of them rejects motherhood that has traditionally been used to oppress women. Just as Stéphanie decides to be <<une mère seule>> in *Possessions* (P 174), so Joëlle and Olga bear their husbands children in *Les Samouraïs*. With Olga, her desire for motherhood further leads into psychoanalytical discourse on maternity, on which the following section focuses.

The Discourse of Maternity

The implication that Olga eventually decides to end her affair with Edward Dalloway and be with Hervé again reflects the bond between her and Hervé, whose intellectual vitality, provocativeness, and perpetual readiness for a fight provides her with a supply of oxygen. Through the reunion between them, which makes the flame of Olga's life burn brightly, their son Alex de Montlaur is born to them.

Describing her experience of conceiving Alex, Olga cries, <<La grossesse est la forme courante de l'extase>> (LS 410). Her feelings about pregnancy pit her against feminists who denounce maternity and reproduction as what the patriarchy uses to oppress women. These feminist denunciations of the patriarchal trap of maternity and reproduction are, however, considered a perpetuation of the taboo of the pregnant woman and a new form of repression, the denial of the passionate, delicious experiences of women's bodies in Hélène Cixous's project on maternity.²⁷

In her delineation of the metaphorically maternal role in *Ille*, Cixous locates <<l'essence de la féminité>> in the womb and hails the feminine as <<[le] sexe maternel>> (1980, 122, 204). This theorisation of the maternal function marks a decisive break with the existentialism of *Le Deuxième Sexe*, in which de Beauvoir stresses the oppressiveness of motherhood as an institution and rejects maternity as a solution to the problem of female transcendence. A comparison thus can be made between the Cixousian concept of the maternal function and the representation of pregnant women in Kristeva's novels.

To start with, Cixous's call for an exploration into the passionate and delicious experiences of women's bodies is embodied in the pregnant woman Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*. As the narrator Stéphanie Delacour describes in her reminiscences about the

²⁶ Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, p. 28. Her theory of female sexuality has been taken up by lesbian feminist critics, which I shall discuss in the conclusion to this thesis.

²⁷ Cixous, *La jeune née*, p. 166.

joy pregnancy brings Gloria: <<Jamais femme ne fut plus heureuse que pendant ces neuf mois au cours desquels elle porta Jerry. Une solitude à deux, l'extase du Bernin avec l'avenir en plus>> (P 64). This description of Gloria's feelings about pregnancy likens Gloria to Olga Morena in *Les Samouraïs*, who further expounds on the idea of <<Une solitude à deux>>:

Les cellules augmentent, se subdivisent, se multiplient. Les seins s'alourdissent, les lèvres enflent, le ventre et les cuisses prennent de plus en plus de volume. Vous n'êtes plus seule, vous êtes double. Il y a un nouveau monde en vous, c'est le Monde; celui du dehors ne compte plus, n'existe plus. Vous regardez, vous écoutez, vous touchez le spectacle qui se déroule à l'extérieur, vous y participez même, car c'est la vie: la vie apparente, partagée, sociale; mais vous n'y êtes qu'en apparence. En réalité, vous êtes dedans, avec votre double, avec lui ou elle, vous n'avez rien à faire ensemble mais vous êtes inséparables, lovés dans une tendresse infinie, fervente, incommunicable aux autres et pour cela même un peu folle (LS 409).

The natural bond between mother and child, which has a tinge of madness because of the impossibility to communicate it to anyone, is indicative of pregnancy as <<Une solitude à deux>> (P 64). This solitude is a process without a subject but a fusion and movement of the organism (the maternal body), which points to pregnancy as a figure for the *chora*, the Kristevan subject that is a subject-in-process.

As Kristeva writes in her attempt to theorise the untheorisable *chora* in *La révolution du langage poétique*,

Des quantités discrètes d'énergies parcourent le corps de ce qui sera plus tard un sujet, et, dans la voie de son devenir, elles se disposent selon les contraintes imposées à ce corps – toujours déjà sémiotisant – par la structure familiale et sociale. Charges <énergétiques> en même temps que marques <psychiques>, les pulsions articulent ainsi ce que nous appelons une *chora*: une totalité non expressive constituée par ces pulsions et leurs *stases* en une motilité aussi mouvementée que réglementée (1974, 23).

The rhythmic world of the *chora* is comparable to the new world inside the pregnant woman Olga Morena in Kristeva's fictional representation of pregnancy in *Les Samouraïs*. This means that the woman-mother Olga does not have a sex, since she is inside with her double. Her identity as a subject is thus betrayed by pregnancy. Maternity does not affirm her identity or value as a woman, but her corporeality, her animality, and her position as a hinge between nature and culture. As she goes on to portray herself as a woman-mother: <<vous faites l'expérience de l'abîme entre le rôle inconsistant que vous jouez sur la scène des relations humaines et cette nuit qui vous comble et vous apaise>> (LS 410). In this sense, the woman-mother, says Elizabeth Grosz in *Sexual Subversions*, "is a screen onto which the child's demands and requirements are projected, and from which images are introjected. 'She' does not exist as such" (1989, 80).

The idea that the woman-mother is ahistorical calls to mind the theorisation of the mother as <<une métaphore>> in Cixous's <<Le rire de la méduse>> in *L'arc* (1975, 44). This metaphorical mother, for Cixous, as well as for Irigaray and Kristeva, gives birth to the unsaid feminine that has been repressed by Western culture and society.²⁸ The return of the repressed "woman" is inscribed in the poetic text, whose open-ended deferral of meaning and refusal to congeal into a symbolic identity, for Kristeva, is the converse of the sacred text or religious discourse. To put it another way, religious discourse is the privileged site of the symbolic, into which the renounced *jouissance* of the drives is recuperated back; it is, as mentioned earlier, the revelation of the unrepresentable *chora*. A representation of this <<sérénité lumineuse de l'irreprésentable>> is embodied in certain Bellini Madonnas,²⁹ of whom the pregnant women Gloria Harrison and Olga Morena in Kristeva's novels are the reincarnations. Just as Gloria experiences <<l'extase du Bernin>> in the course of pregnancy in *Possessions* (P 64), so Olga feels <<un peu folle>> in her inability to communicate to anyone a sense of exhilaration, to which pregnancy leads, in *Les Samourais* (LS 409).

Yet, in Catholic doctrine, the Virgin Mary, according to Kristeva, embodies a model of motherhood that is patriarchal. As she says in <<Stabat Mater>> in *Histoires d'amour*, <<En effet, mère de son fils et fille de celui-ci, Marie est aussi, et en outre, son épouse: elle réalise par conséquent la triple métamorphose d'une femme dans le système le plus étroit de la parenté>> (1983, 305-306). This construction of motherhood, for Kristeva, fails to account for the mother's relations with men or other women, especially with a daughter. As she puts it,

Il y a aussi, parmi les oublis du mythe virginal, la guerre de la fille avec sa mère, résolue magistralement mais trop rapidement par la promotion de Marie comme universelle et particulière, mais jamais singulière: comme <unique de son sexe> (1983, 325).

Despite the faults of excluding the mother-daughter relationship from consideration, the cult of the Virgin Mary who stands above both men and women (1983, 321-323),³⁰ having relations only with God and her son, has informed classical psychoanalytical theories of the maternal function.³¹ In order to save the mother from classical psychoanalysis, it is necessary to develop a model of the mother-child relationship that does not exclude the imaginary

²⁸ See Luce Irigaray, <<Le Corps-à-corps avec la mère>>, *Amante marine de Friedrich Nietzsche* and *L'Oubli de l'air*.

²⁹ Kristeva, <<Maternité selon Giovanni Bellini>>, in *Polylogue*, p. 415.

³⁰ See Marina Warner's *Alone of All Her Sex: the Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*.

³¹ See, for instance, Jacques Lacan, <<L'instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient ou la raison depuis Freud>> and <<Subversion du sujet et dialectique du désir dans l'inconscient freudien>>, in *Écrits*, pp. 493-528 and pp. 793-827.

relations Kristeva proposes in her discussion of the virginal myth.

An example of the workings of the erotic relations between women and men in the figure of Mary appears in Luce Irigaray's *Amante marine de Friedrich Nietzsche*. Through Irigaray's imagination, we meet the Virgin Mary who is neither merely the body-object nor merely the spirit but the in-between. On the one hand, as the figure of Mary, she is the incarnation of the divine spirit, but on the other hand, since the god-child must be born from a body, she is corporeal. Her maternal body as such is the incarnation through otherness. As Irigaray writes,

La pénétration du verbe dans un corps rappelant et appelant toujours l'entrée de ce corps dans une parole. Sortie des tombeaux. Accès à un au-delà ici maintenant. Passage des corps-cadavres à un dire qui les transfigure – les sort des murs de leur mort. Franchissant leurs propres limites dans la rencontre avec la chair de l'autre. Vivante, si elle parle. Incarne, elle aussi, le divin (1980, 180-181).

Since the divine is necessarily incarnate, God is not dead but co-exists with it. At the same time, the divine is inside with Mary. In this sense, the divine can be said to be produced in the exchange between two living springs nourishing each other. The image of <<l'incessant mouvement de deux sources qui se fécondent l'une l'autre>> in turn leads Irigaray to suggest that it could be <<[le] gage d'éternel bonheur>> (1980, 44); this points to the god-child as the result of two different sexes giving (themselves) to each other through the wonder at their difference.

That said, the mother in Irigaray's new tale of the Virgin Mary is not silent and ignored as she is in classical psychoanalysis. Rather, she is a speaking, loving, and desiring human being and her relationship with the child is a more fluid and potentially reciprocal one. If we re-conceive the mother-child relationship, which serves as the prototypical relation that sets up the possibility of all subsequent relations in psychoanalytical theory, from this inter-subjective theory, an ethical relationship between two sexes is born.

Although Kristeva does not detect an imaginary loving relationship between women and men in the figure of Mary, she agrees with Irigaray that the cult of the Virgin does not allow for an image of the mother as a speaking social being. In the theoretical half of <<Stabat Mater>>, she suggests that we need an image of maternity that can found, rather than threaten, social relationships. This reconceived notion of maternity would engender what she calls <<hérétique>>, a heretical ethics that, unlike the Catholic image of the Virgin, does not reduce women to <<Lait et pleurs>> (1983, 327, 312). The only way for women to actualise this ethics of heresy, to re-establish their identities with the maternal body, is through becoming mothers themselves. As she explains in <<Maternité selon Giovanni Bellini>> in *Polylogue*, <<En enfantant, elle touche à sa mère, elle la devient, elle est elle, elles sont une même continuité se différenciant: ainsi se réalise le versant

homosexuel de la maternité [...]» (1977, 411). This thesis of pregnancy and childbirth as a reunion of a woman with her mother, which brings back primal homosexual bonds, is radically opposed to Freud's theory that childbirth is motivated by penis envy. The maternal body in this <<*Versant maternel-homosexuel*>> as such is not defined in relation to masculine sexuality and a phallic economy of desire as it is in Freud, but locates its *jouissance* in femininity and maternity itself (1977, 411).

These new tales of the Virgin Mary change our very image of relationships between women and men and women (mothers) and women (daughters) in terms of psychoanalysis, even if on a metaphorical level. Here reproduction or motherhood is not an economy of oppressiveness but a possibility of undermining the patriarchal edifice, if, as Irigaray claims, to think <<de la mère en toute femme, de la femme en toute mère>>³² is a forbidden act. This possibility is embodied in the pregnant women Olga Morena and Gloria Harrison, who allow us to think of the mother in them and of them in every mother, in Kristeva's novels. Through the reconceived notions of maternity, it is also possible to think of these women-mothers' relationships with others, a possibility which will enable us to conceptualise sexual difference in a different way. All of these possibilities are founded on the maternal bodies where the women-mothers' relationships with others first take place, albeit that Irigaray may object to an ethics modelled on the maternal body.³³

Describing her experience of becoming pregnant, the woman-mother Olga says in *Les Samourais* that <<Alors même que la mère ignore l'embryon qui prend vie en elle, son corps est déjà au courant>> (LS 409). This description of the maternal body points to the maternal body as a subject-in-process. Neither the woman-mother nor the foetus controls pregnancy. Rather, both are involved in what Kristeva calls a receptacle <<comme nourricier et maternel, non encore unifié en un Univers [...] différente de celle de la loi symbolique, mais qui n'effectue pas moins des discontinuités en les articulant provisoirement, et en recommençant continuellement>>.³⁴ The interaction between the maternal (the semiotic) and the paternal (the symbolic) then constitutes the signifying process, from which the concept of an alterity-within emerges. As Olga goes on to explain the relationship between the foetus and the woman-mother, <<l'autre qui est en vous révèle que vous êtes une autre>> (LS 410). This interrelationship between the other and the self is indicative of the maternal body as the

³² Irigaray, <<Le corps-à-corps avec la mère>>, in *Sexes et Parentés*, p. 29. In this essay, Irigaray points out that <<Quand Freud décrit et théorise, notamment dans *Totem et tabou*, le meurtre de père comme fondateur de la horde primitive, il oublie un meurtre plus archaïque, celui de la femme-mère, nécessité par l'établissement d'un certain ordre dans la cité>> (1987, 23).

³³ Irigaray, *Je, tu, nous: Toward a Culture of Difference*, p. 41.

³⁴ Julia Kristeva, *La révolution du langage poétique*, p. 25.

embodiment of an alterity-within, which ushers in the question of ethics that requires a relationship between two that are neither identical nor autonomous.³⁵

That question dominates Olga's meditation on how she shall approach her relationship with her son Alex after she gives birth to him (LS 423): <<Mon enfant, mon destin, quel mot trouver pour nommer ce lien qui m'attache à toi [...]?>> (LS 425) The answer is <<Le temps>>, not <<Un corps>> or <<Un amour>> (LS 425), for Alex has opened the present that consists of the past and the future to her:

<[...] Je voyage grâce à toi dans le temps d'une mémoire ouverte en amont et en aval, dont je ne suis plus sûre qu'elle soit la mienne, car ton odeur, tes cris, tes goûts greffent en moi des mondes inconnus. A travers mes fantaisies, je devine les tiennes: j'habite les fantaisies d'un autre, tu remodelles mes souvenirs et mes phrases comme tu as resculpté mon corps, j'apprends maintenant à être différente avec les différents, et pour commencer avec toi ...> (LS 427).

This process of learning through caring for the other grants Olga an image of a speaking social being, since the fact that Alex is at once present and not yet present, existing only in her <<mémoire>> and <<fantaisies>> (LS 427), associates her with the metaphorical mother in the reconceived notions of maternity. What brings this process that involves an ethical relationship between the mother and the child into being is words, which leads into the question of maternity and writing.

Through writing, Olga retells the life of a mother who becomes <<un enfant en train de naître, de grandir, de jouir, de subir, de dormir, de se laisser faire, mais aussi de nourrir, sourire, bercer, soigner, élever, et même de parler parfois>> (LS 428). This word-representation of her experience of motherhood is reminiscent of Joëlle Cabarus's perceptions of why a writer writes: <<*cela ne vaut peut-être la peine d'écrire que pour refaire le jeu de vie et de mort à l'usage des enfants que nous oublions d'être*>> (LS 459). At this point the fictional mother Olga meets the novelist and real mother Kristeva, who brings the Parisian intellectuals of the late 1960s to life in *Les Samourais*. Words are made flesh in this fusion of fiction and reality, death and life; and voice is that which underlies the word-representation of these women-mothers' experience of motherhood. The correlation between voice and words in discourses of maternity in turn can be related to Cixous's discussion about writing and maternity in *Ille*.

Opposing <<l'écriture par la voix>> that is feminine to <<l'écriture par écrit>> that is masculine (1980, 208), Cixous suggests that maternal woman has an essential connection to the voice that man lacks. <<[Un] privilège de la voix>>, according to her in *La jeune née*,

³⁵ For "if they are identical, there is no relationship and therefore no ethics. And if they are completely autonomous then there is only external law to bind two individuals together and ground obligations to the other [...]" (1995, 189), remarks Kelly Oliver in *Womanizing Nietzsche: Philosophy's Relation to the "Feminine."*

is that <<écriture et voix se tressent, se trament et en s'échangeant, continuité de l'écriture/rythme de la voix, se *coupent* le souffle, font haleter le texte ou le composent de suspens, de silences, l'aphonisent ou le déchirent de cris>> (1975, 170). This <<chant d'avant la loi, avant que le souffle soit coupé par le symbolique>> finds its expression in the mother's good milk (1975, 172, 173), which can be applied to reading Kristeva's representation of the woman-mother Olga's experience of childbirth in *Les Samouraïs*:

C'était une immense phrase qui sautait de virgule en virgule, d'exclamation en exclamation, qui montait, qui descendait, qui se serrait, qui se dilatait de ligne en ligne, de page en page, de chapitre en chapitre, sans répit, sans point, rien que des virgules et des exclamations, aiguë, déchirante, confuse, ahurissante.

C'était une vague, elle enflait, elle arrondissait sa crête, elle ramassait ses forces et abattait la baigneuse sur le sable, sans souffle, les os brisés; puis elle reprenait, remontait, rassemblait à nouveau ses forces, plus sauvage encore, et jetait de nouveau la baigneuse sur la glaise, essoufflée, broyée ... Un, deux, trois ... Une petite vague juste pour que les grosses reprennent de l'énergie ... Et de nouveau: un, deux, trois, cela monte, cela se dilate, cela broie, vous n'avez plus d'air, l'enfer ne saurait être pire, pitié, y aura-t-il une fin, vous n'êtes plus, vous êtes une vague sans répit, une phrase sans souffle, rien qu'exclamations, gonflements, coups qui frappent, qui fendent (LS 421-422).

The inexhaustible rhythm of giving birth to a child is comparable to the flow of the maternal milk that is "the predominant metaphorical vehicle for Cixousian writing in the feminine",³⁶ says Domna C. Stanton. Yet <<l'écriture par la voix>> here is embodied in <<l'écriture par écrit>> rather than a representation of what has not yet been written itself. Thus, it is not a production deriving from the female body, which has to do with the difference between Kristeva's and Cixous's view of language.

Unlike Cixous, Kristeva does not put forward another feminine language or a women's language that would destroy the male hegemony – the paternal phallus and male language being the same within the Lacanian symbolic order. For the notion of a women's language raises the question of how it can be expressed if it has to break out of the prison of language.³⁷ In other words, the only way to articulate the rhythmic babble of onomatopoeic sounds exchanged between mother and child, which has been repressed by Western culture, is to reuse male language (even neologisms), although <<[le] chant d'avant la loi, avant [...] le symbolique>> perturbs the logic of the signifying chain. Hence, for Kristeva, language is itself the interplay of the feminine that is associated with the semiotic and the masculine that is associated with the symbolic, through which one can disrupt the symbolic order from

³⁶ Stanton, "Difference on Trial: A Critique of the Maternal Metaphor in Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva", in *The Poetics of Gender*, p. 168.

³⁷ See, for instance, Elaine Marks, "Women and Literature in France", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 3, 4 (1978).

within.³⁸ This is embodied in her fictional representation of the relationship between maternity and writing in *Les Samouraïs*.

Yet it is the maternal body in her discourses of maternity in the novel that embodies her concept of a subject-in-process that emerges from the interaction between the semiotic and the symbolic. This returns us to the question of pregnancy, a question which I propose to examine from the point of view of the Madonna. With Kristeva, the cult of the Virgin Mary entails the possibility of a new discourse of maternity, of which the mother's relationship with the daughter is the focus. Here she introduces the concept of a <<*Versant maternel-homosexuel*>> to explain that relationship (1977, 411), in which the daughter is reunited with the mother through pregnancy and childbirth. This distinguishes her from classical psychoanalytical theorists, who claim that a woman's longing to have a child from her father is a compensation for her desire for a penis.

For Freud, for instance, the girl, hoping that she can have her father's penis at her disposal, needs to identify with her mother. Her identification with her mother thus involves her hostility towards her mother, a hostility which directs her to love her father and culminates in her wish to have a baby from him. What leads her to feel hostile towards her mother is the discovery that her mother does not have a penis. This discovery leaves her feeling cheated by her mother not only because she does not have a penis but also because her mother does not have one. She blames her mother for her lack of a penis and is therefore the opposite of the woman, whose identification with her mother is through love, in Kristeva's formulation of a homosexual facet of motherhood (1977, 411).

For Kristeva, motherhood is a woman's self-realisation to identify with her mother, who is the Imaginary Father.³⁹ Through pregnancy and childbirth, the woman <<*touche à sa mère, elle la devient, elle est elle*>> (1977, 411). A reincarnation of this woman-mother is the heroine Olga Morena in *Les Samouraïs*, who is reunited with her mother in recounting her experience of motherhood:

<Tu [i.e. Alex] m'as rappelé le passé: j'avais oublié d'être petite, tu me découvres mineure et fragile, je retrouve le goût du lait dans une bouche lisse, le parfum des premières fraises sur les gencives gonflées de dents qui percent, le vertige des pas hésitants, les chocs des chutes quand maman, trop confiante, me laissait courir et sentir les roses à l'autre bout de l'allée, les halos de mes yeux éblouis de bébé qui ne voient que du bleu ou du rouge, et, peu à peu, le contour d'un visage brun, d'une nappe brodée, d'une cuillère sonore (LS 425-426).

The reunion between Olga and her mother through the birth of Alex points to love as the cause of a woman's identification with her mother; motherhood needs the support of a

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 836-837.

³⁹ See my discussion of the Imaginary Father in the first chapter of this thesis, pp. 47-49.

mother's mother (1983, 287). This "loving the Other as/in Oneself",⁴⁰ which Kristeva terms <<hérétique>> (1983, 327), while utopian, nevertheless presents the site of maternity with new understandings and interpretations.

The presence of a newly born mother in the Kristevan tale of the Virgin Mary brings us back to Irigaray's new tale of the Virgin Mary, in which the mother's erotic relations with men, the divine and God, rewrite the Catholic model of motherhood. Framing maternity in Irigaray's, as well as in Kristeva's, figure of Mary, a her/ethics emerges. Reproduction is not <<si naturel, si évident>> (LS 122), as Kristeva's fictional character Martin Cazenave, following patriarchal ideology, defines it in *Les Samouraïs*, but is a complex of social and biological process that does not reduce women to <<Lait et pleurs>> (1983, 312). The mother in these imaginary discourses of maternity is a speaking, loving, and desiring human being, whose fluid and potentially reciprocal relationship with her child can found the social relationships. This search for a "good" mother-child relationship that will change the relationships between women and men and women (mothers) and women (daughters) can further be related to Kristeva's fictional representation of discourses of the war between the sexes, in which men and women participate in defining what amounts to being a good enough mother.

A Her/ethics of Maternity

The concept of a good enough mother is associated with the object-relations theorist D. W. Winnicott's discussion about a mother's responsibility in *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development*:

In my terminology the good-enough mother is able to meet the needs of her infant at the beginning and to meet these needs so well that the infant, as emergence from the matrix of the infant-mother relationship takes place, is able to have a brief *experience of omnipotence* (This has to be distinguished from *omnipotence*, which is the name given to a quality of feeling) (1965, 57).

This account of what amounts to being a good enough mother has been taken up by Nancy Chodorow in her formulation of a "good" mother-child relationship in *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Like Winnicott, she suggests that a good enough mother "needs to know both when her child is ready to distance itself and to initiate demands for care, and when it is feeling unable to be distant or separate" (1978, 84). This means that "selflessness" and "delicate assessments" are that which characterises good maternal behaviour, to which the story of the woman-mother Olga Morena in Kristeva's *Les Samouraïs* can be related.

⁴⁰ Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*, p. 65.

Compared with the selfish mother Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*, Olga is able to know what her son Alex needs by identifying herself with him:

Nous allons nous donner tout le temps nécessaire pour déchiffrer ensemble la devinette *vie*. Tu la continueras à ta façon, ni bien ni mal, comme tu peux, comme tu veux. D'abord tu m'attendras et je t'attendrai. Puis tu n'auras plus besoin de mon rythme, tu suivras le tien, pour le meilleur et pour le pire, et je me retirerai à ce moment-là, tu seras seul dans ton temps à toi, ma patience aura accompli son temps à elle (LS 426-427).

Her delicate assessments of what she and her child will experience associate her with the image of a good mother. This association points to a cultural and social system of values at work, a criterion which is also used by Pauline Gadeau in *Possessions*: she regards Gloria as a bad mother. The dichotomy between a good and a bad mother is, however, problematic for Stéphanie Delacour in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, whose image of her friend Alba as a mother exemplifies. In that image, Alba is represented as both a loving and a violent mother, for, if she were to have a child, she <<lui aurait donné sans cesse des câlins et des claques>> (VH 81). Neither good nor bad but in-between, this imaginary loving and violent mother finds her counterpart in reality in Stéphanie's assessment of Gloria's maternal behaviour in *Possessions*.

For Stéphanie, to say that Gloria is a selfish and violent mother, as Pauline does, dismisses Gloria's devotion to her son Jerry. At least in the early days of Gloria's motherhood, Jerry's physical problem does not get her into a panic. On the contrary, she clings on to poor little Jerry, which, according to Stéphanie, is <<Un amour. Son amour. L'unique>> (P 66); this love for Jerry makes her live on the border of nervous collapse. Her "bad" maternal behaviour has everything to do with her excessive love for Jerry. As Stéphanie recalls,

L'enfant avait fini par posséder Gloria. Sexe, ambition, séduction, réussite professionnelle, charme féminin, gym, équitation, coiffeur, sorties, dîners, invitations, cocktails – le monde, autant dire, s'était volatilisé. Disparu. Plus rien. Mais c'était à peine si Gloria s'en apercevait, elle ne regrettait rien, vivait à fond. La possession: un seul amour qui absorbe l'univers et vous résorbe dedans, ou dehors, aucune différence. Il n'y a plus de <vous>. Possédée, vous cédez devant ce qui n'est pas un pouvoir, mais une évidence (P 73).

One cannot deny how selfless Gloria is in this scene. If "selflessness" is characteristic of good maternal behaviour, Gloria qualifies as a good mother. Yet it is precisely the fact that she is unaware of giving her life to Jerry that leads her to becoming violent towards Jerry.⁴¹

Prior to Michael Fish's forcing Gloria to send Jerry to Switzerland, old Mrs. Harrison suggested the same idea to Gloria. As Stéphanie tells us, <<C'est de naissance, disait la

⁴¹ See my discussion about how Gloria's possessive love for Jerry turns her into a melancholic-depressive in the second chapter of this thesis, pp. 63-64.

vieille Mme Harrison qui ne comprenait rien à l'acharnement de sa fille; tu devrais penser un peu à toi; as-tu songé à ces centres en Suisse? On en dit beaucoup de bien>>

(P 73). Old Mrs. Harrison's suggestion that voices a mother's affection towards a daughter cuts no ice with Gloria, who insists on taking care of her handicapped son alone.

Obliterating her own life is what Gloria does to pay for her decision. Frustrated by Jerry in her efforts to teach him to speak, in turn takes the form of child abuse. As Stéphanie speaks on behalf of Pauline Gadeau, who dislikes Gloria, Gloria's melancholy ends in <<ces effusions, ces déluges de câlins suivis d'une avalanche de claques ...>> (P 265). Turning her love for Jerry into violence (claques) towards him that nevertheless involves a mother's love (câlins), Gloria troubles the dichotomy between a good and a bad mother. She thus constitutes an example that challenges the object-relations theorist D. W. Winnicott's oppressive narrative about "good-enough mothering" as "natural" and "intuitive",⁴² a narrative which fails to take the mother's subjectivity into account.

As Kristeva, for instance, comments on Winnicott's narrative regarding "the child and the good-enough mother" in her conversation with Rosalind Coward,

[The mother-child relationship] is an enigma, no body knows what the good-enough mother is. I wouldn't try to explain what that is, but I would try to suggest that maybe the good enough mother is the mother who has something else to love besides her child, it could be her work, her husband, her lovers, etc. If for a mother the child is the meaning of her life, it's too heavy. She has to have another meaning in her life. And this other meaning in her life is the father of prehistory.⁴³

By "the father of prehistory", Kristeva refers to what she calls <<le conglomerat père-mère>> in *Histoires d'amour* (1983, 56). This loving mother in the figure of the Imaginary Father is <<différente de la mère soignante et collante>> (1983, 48). She, as Kristeva goes on to explain, <<est quelqu'un qui a un objet de désir et, par-delà, un Autre par rapport auquel l'enfant lui servira d'intermédiaire>> (1983, 48). In this sense, she serves as a model of divided subjectivity because her relation to the symbolic coexists with her semiotic relation to the child. She is positioned within both the semiotic and the symbolic orders, desiring the child and desiring also the world outside.

This Kristevan concept of a divided mother is embodied in Gloria. On the one hand, she desires Jerry, although that longing involves child abuse. On the other hand, she also desires the world outside motherhood, a world which is represented by her lover Michael Fish. Her love affair with Michael Fish, however, puts her on the side of a bad mother in Pauline Gadeau's view. This judgement on Gloria, which Pauline passes, subjects women to

⁴² Winnicott, "A Man Looks at Motherhood", in *The Child and the Family*, pp. 3-6.

⁴³ Kristeva, "Julia Kristeva in Conversation with Rosalind Coward", in *The Portable Kristeva*, p. 334. See also my discussion about the Imaginary Father in the first chapter of this thesis.

an ethics that implies that a woman cannot be a “good” mother if she cannot identify herself completely with her child. A pre-established cultural and social system of values is clearly involved in such a criterion for determining successful and unsuccessful mothering, which points to the violence of ideology. At this point the story of Gloria can be compared with that of Rosalind Bergman in *Les Samourais*. In taking her children away from her husband and abandoning him for another man, Rosalind, as discussed earlier, is considered a psychotic. Not only do her parents find it difficult to accept her maternal behaviour, but also the Dalloway grandparents are disappointed in her.

The problem with the Dalloway grandparents, Dr. and Mrs. Bergman and Pauline’s attitude towards the “immoral”, “bad” mothers Rosalind and Gloria as biased worsens when we approach the issues of immorality and bad maternal behaviour from the perspective of Rosalind and Gloria. Rosalind does not regret leaving her country to live with her lover Isaac in Israel. As she tells us in a conversation she has with her husband Edward Dalloway, she feels good about her new identity, Ruth Goldenberg:

- Tu n’es pas fatiguée? Tu dois avoir trop de travail, et avec ces chaleurs du désert ... Comment te sens-tu? (Edward.)
- Si tu veux dire par là que je suis malade, détrompe-toi, je ne me suis jamais aussi bien portée, une santé de fer. (Ruth.)
- Tu n’es quand même pas devenue religieuse? (Dalloway.)
- Je n’ai pas à le devenir, je l’ai toujours été, sans le savoir, peut-être, mais je l’ai redécouvert. (Goldenberg.)
- Tu manges casher? (Dalloway.)
- Bien entendu. (Goldenberg.)
- Pourquoi pas, au fond? Mais, voyons, il existe une gamme d’opinions dans cette religion, tu n’es tout de même pas orthodoxe? (Dalloway.)
- Je ne sais pas. Isaac l’est, et ses amis sont peut-être la garantie la plus sûre de l’existence d’Israël (Goldenberg.) (LS 322-323).

Her belief in the choice she makes for her life poses a challenge to the ideology of morality. Yet being immoral allows her to pursue the world outside home, a world which corresponds to her understanding of existence. This also characterises her counterpart Gloria’s perceptions of what a woman needs in *Possessions*. As Gloria says to her maid-housekeeper, Hester Bellini, about her love affair with Michael Fish, <<‘Une femme seule, ma pauvre Hester [...] c’est pire qu’une femme maltraitée’>> (P 152). The pursuit of love, however, turns her into a “bad” mother, whose violent behaviour towards her son Jerry scars him.

Although Ruth or Rosalind does not treat her children Patricia and Jason in a violent way, she, as her ex-husband Edward implies, is a bad influence on them in that she has an immoral relationship with Isaac Chemtov. In reply to his mistress Olga’s question, <<Les enfants vont bien?>> (LS 330), Edward says,

- Parfaits. Mais Patricia semble avoir quelques difficultés dans ses études. Jason est dans l’armée, ce qui ne l’empêche pas de participer à un

mouvement pacifiste animé par la gauche: le meilleur moyen de tirer la barbe (c'est le cas de le dire) à son beau-père. Comme tu le sais, Ruth a épousé son fameux Chemtov (LS 330).

The problem Patricia and Jason have with adapting to their new environment points to the fact that Ruth is not a good enough mother, if we relate this to Winnicott's "good-enough mothering" model. For a good enough mother is able to "know" what her infant "needs", which Ruth, as well as her counterpart Gloria, fails to do.

Yet, in what way is a mother good enough in knowing what her infant needs? According to Chodorow, for a good enough mother, to know what her infant needs must be "done through empathy, primary identification, and experiencing the infant as continuous with the self and not separate" (1978, 84). This, on the other hand, raises the question of "How does the mother come to 'know' what it is her infant 'needs'?"⁴⁴ for the critic Christine Everingham. An answer to that question is the mutual recognition between the child and the mother, which relates the work of Everingham to that of Jessica Benjamin. As Benjamin writes in *The Bonds of Love*, "the child has a need to see the mother [...] as an independent subject, not simply as the 'external world' or an adjunct of his ego" (1990, 23). This emphasis on the mother's subjectivity in her relationship with her child problematises the "good-enough mothering" model, which can be applied to Kristeva's fictional representation of "bad" maternal behaviour.

In terms of the story of Ruth or Rosalind in *Les Samouraïs*, lack of mutual recognition between her and her children Patricia and Jason is interpreted as her inability to know what they need. For her bad maternal behaviour, which makes her children rebellious, may be a fabrication that is a reflection of the fact that her ex-husband, Edward, is jealous of her marriage to her lover Chemtov. As is clear in a conversation Edward has with his mistress Olga, Edward has tried to put Chemtov in a very negative light:

Désopilant bonhomme. Depuis sa visite au M.I.T., il s'est laissé pousser la barbe, et, tout en perfectionnant les ordinateurs de l'armée, il se balade avec un pistolet (je le soupçonne de savoir à peine s'en servir) pour se protéger des futurs lanceurs de pierres; il discourt contre l'égoïsme du monde libre, spécialement des États-Unis qui seraient en train de lâcher Israël (LS 330-331).

This account of the story of Chemtov is indicative of Edward's unwillingness to accept the fact that his relationship with Ruth is over, which Olga's reply captures: <<[Chemtov] a peut-être raison de se méfier. Tu es jaloux>> (LS 331). Moreover, to label Ruth as a bad mother fails to address her children's feelings about her, an issue with which the "bad" mother-child relationship between Gloria and Jerry in *Possessions* has close parallels.

⁴⁴ Everingham, *Motherhood and Modernity*, p. 19.

Here Jerry's deafness which prevents him from protecting himself against his mother, who treats him badly, complicates the need for mutual recognition between the child and the mother. On the other hand, Gloria's "bad" maternal behaviour is not so much a consequence of not knowing what Jerry needs but of not wanting to know what he needs. The difficulty they have communicating with each other implies that "good-enough mothering" should be treated as an act of interpretation rather than as a discipline involving judgements of success and failure. This refers us to the attitude of St  phanie Delacour, who asks who has the right to set the criteria for "good-enough mothering" in the first instance? Her interpretation of Gloria's maternal behaviour as neither good nor bad, for instance, suggests an impossibility of making judgements of successful and unsuccessful mothering, thereby questioning the possibility of talking about "good-enough mothering". Yet how can we account for that impossibility?

At issue in attempting to theorise "good-enough mothering" as an act of interpretation is the concept of encounter. This is a concept which I borrow from Gayatri Spivak's *Three Stories by Mahasweta Devi: Imaginary Maps*. In that book, Spivak has "attempted to open the structure of an impossible social justice [...] through remote and secret encounters with singular figures" in translating Devi's stories (1995, 197). These "singular figures" whom Spivak encounters reside in "the specificity of language, theme, and history as well as [...] hegemonic notions of a hybrid global culture" of "so-called 'Third World' literature" (1995, 197). Reading this literature with a vision of impossible justice through attention to specificity, Spivak finds a solution to her inability to speak for the subaltern woman, the non-elite colonised subject.⁴⁵ Her experience of encountering the subaltern woman, which is an experience of "an impossible global justice" (1995, 297), can be applied to Kristeva's fictional representation of St  phanie's encounter with the loving and violent mother Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*.

Unable to speak for Gloria, St  phanie tries to open up the criteria for making judgements about successful and unsuccessful mothering through a "secret encounter" with Gloria. In this sense, she can be said to have translated Spivak's story of "ethical singularity", in which Spivak meets the subaltern woman in her position in "the name of 'love'" in order to supplement "necessary collective efforts to change laws, modes of production, systems of education and health care" (1995, 200-201), with the story of a her/ethics. This story of a her/ethics, which embodies Spivak's theory that "ethics is the experience of the impossible",⁴⁶ also explains St  phanie's "secret encounter" with Alba Ram,

⁴⁵ See my discussion of this figure in the introduction to part one of this thesis, p. 21.

⁴⁶ Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (eds), *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, p. 270.

the loving and violent mother in her imagination, in *Le vieil homme et les loups*.

Not merely good or bad but in-between, the potential mother Alba and the actual mother Gloria embody a new understanding of maternity that resides in a new understanding of ethics. The correlation between maternity and ethics in turn brings us back to the question of whether women are subject to ethics, a question which, in addition to the question of what the desire for motherhood corresponds to, prompts Kristeva to re-examine the equation of ethics and maternity in <<Stabat Mater>> and <<Le temps des femmes>>.⁴⁷

Alison Ainley re-reads Kristeva's re-examination of the equation of ethics and maternity in her essay "The Ethics of Sexual Difference" in *Abjection, Melancholia and Love: The Work of Julia Kristeva*. Here Ainley suggests that the question of whether women are subject to ethics "is important in that it draws attention to the ethical framework within which such a question may be raised at all" (1990, 53). According to her,

It is a framework which valorizes freedom and equality for all individuals, and yet simultaneously demands that the criteria for achieving those aims be those generally associated with men [...] Such a framework disavows the inequality which seems to arise when distinctions between individual are made, and yet also promotes certain qualities at the expense of others (1990, 53).

Thus, if we are to avoid the violence of claiming that ethics resides positively in a universal framework or in a set of procedures for making judgements, we have to turn to Spivak, who traces ethics through "secret encounters with singular figures" (1995, 197).

The workings of Spivak's concept of encounter in the question of whether women are subject to ethics relates Spivak's theory of "ethics [as] the experience of the impossible" to the fictional character Stéphanie Delacour's encounters with the loving and violent mothers Alba Ram and Gloria Harrison. Through those encounters that acquaint her with the experience of the impossible, since she is unable to speak for Alba and Gloria, Stéphanie is able to talk about the possibility of the equation of ethics and maternity. In other words, a her/ethics of maternity is predicated upon the impossibility of talking about ethics. A new understanding of maternal ethics as such lies in an experience of the impossible rather than in the framework within which the question "Are women subject to ethics?" arises.

This story of a her/ethics, which juxtaposes the actual mother Gloria Harrison and the potential mother Alba Ram in a re-examination of the equation of ethics and maternity, is reminiscent of Irigaray and Kristeva's new tales of the Virgin Mary, in which the actual

⁴⁷ See Kristeva, *Les nouvelles maladies de l'âme*, p. 324; see also her essay <<Un nouveau type d'intellectuel: le dissident>>, in *Tel Quel* 74 (1977), p. 6.

pregnant women in Kristeva's novels have a dialogical relationship with the textual woman.⁴⁸ Here the woman-mother is a speaking, loving and desiring human being; her relationship with her child is fluid and potentially reciprocal, and can found social relationships. A comparison thus can be made between this idea of reciprocity and that of mutual recognition as the precondition for "good-enough mothering". These "good" mother-child relationships are present in and absent from the story of a her/ethics. On the one hand, the image of Gloria and Alba as loving mothers associates them with the mother in the figure of Mary and the good enough mother. This likens them to the woman-mother Olga Morena, whose reciprocal interaction with her son Alex spawns an ethical relationship between the sexes and actualises the homosexual facet of motherhood, in *Les Samouraïs*. On the other hand, the image of them as violent mothers brings up the question of whether women are subject to ethics, which leads to the re-conceptualisation of Spivak's theory of "ethics [as] the experience of the impossible". The return of the theme of violence in turn paves the way for next chapter, in which the relation of violence to the body will be examined in the context of the mind-body dichotomy of the European philosophical tradition.

⁴⁸ See next chapter for a detailed discussion about the textual woman or the concept of the feminine.

VI BODY

Et voilà qu'elle en était séparée, de son organe ou
de son outil, ce qui la rendait presque anonyme.
Julia Kristeva, *Possessions*

Deploring the tragic death of her friend Gloria Harrison, who was decapitated, Stéphanie Delacour in *Possessions* thinks that without her head, Gloira is made <<presque anonyme>> (P 11). This reflection on decapitation captures the cultural take-up of the mind-body split, in which the body occupies the place of the excluded other, and can be dismissed from consideration altogether. As, for instance, Margrit Shildrick and Janet Price have pointed out in *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*, "The status of the body within the dominant Western intellectual tradition has largely been one of absence or dismissal" (1999, 1). Invisible, the body bears the violence of the mind-body dichotomy of European philosophical tradition,¹ of which the corpse of Kristeva's fictional character Gloria Harrison is the embodiment.

As evidence of the symbolic violence of the hierarchized binary opposition, in which the body or indefinite matter is subordinate to the mind or limiting form, Gloria's corpse is also indicative of the visible violence of the murder that suggests contemporary savagery. The former conveys how the European philosophical tradition has shaped the culture of violence in which women live² and the latter relates the connection between the body and violence to the symbolisation of the unwholesome crime-ridden city, Santa Barbara.³ This serves as the starting point for my exploration into the question of the dualism of the West's Cartesian heritage, a need which is implicated in the theme of evil that is embodied in the murder of Gloria. Through that exploration, which shall constitute the first section of this chapter, the body enters discourses in the human sciences. The return of the body in turn takes the form of the feminine that is associated with the term French feminist theory, on which the second section of this chapter shall focus. At issue in this discussion of the textual woman is its relation to Kristeva's new tales of the Virgin Mary, from which an analysis of her theory of the body in *Les nouvelles maladies de l'âme* ensues. This analysis will allow me to relate French feminist theory to Anglo-American

¹ See Shildrick and Price, *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*, pp. 1-14.

² See my discussion about the discourse of "The War Between the Sexes" in Kristeva's novels in the previous chapter, pp. 138-139.

³ Kristeva in her interview with Bernard Sichère on the novel, *Le vieil homme et les loups*, remarks that <<Le nom même de Santa Barbara suggère>>, for her, <<d'abord la barbarie ambiante, mais également, par référence à un feuilleton américain connu, la société américaine repue et cette banalisation qui est l'un des traits de la sauvagerie moderne>>, in *L'Infini* 37 (1992), p. 76.

feminism, in which the textual woman is made flesh, and to bring the discussion about the possibility of putting the French in dialogue with the Anglo-Americans by means of Kristeva's novels to a conclusion.

The Sacrificial Body

To undo the violence of the mind-body dichotomy of European philosophical tradition, it is necessary to understand how that dichotomy comes into being. Within the history of Western philosophy, Plato compares that dichotomy to the relationship between the father and the mother in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle likens it to the relationship between male and female in the *Metaphysics*.⁴ Male theories of power⁵ thereafter often associate the body with the feminine, the female, or woman. In so doing, as Elizabeth Grosz has pointed out in her essay "Bodies and knowledges: Feminism and the Crisis of Reason", "Men are able to dominate knowledge paradigms because women take on the function of representing the *body*, the *irrational*, the *natural*, or other epistemologically devalued binary terms".⁶ So powerful is this conventional masculinist imagination of women as biologically destined to inferior status in all spheres that privilege rationality that many feminists have been reluctant to engage with the female body,⁷ a reluctance which results in the body's invisibility.

The status of the body as one of absence in the development of feminist theories of the body conveys the harmful effects of the masculinist view of the body, a view which is re-inscribed in the decapitated body of the fictional character Gloria Harrison in Kristeva's novel. Gloria's corpse as illustrative of the relation of violence to the body that is associated with the mind-body dichotomy at the same time connotes sacrifice. As Elizabeth Grosz further suggests in her discussion about bodies and knowledges, "By positioning woman as the body, [men] can project themselves and their products as disembodied, pure, and uncontaminated".⁸ The body in masculinist discourse of the body thus has been denigrated as weak, immoral, unclean, or

⁴ See Plato, *Plato's Timaeus*, translated by Francis M. Cornford; edited by Oskar Piest; Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, chapter 6, 998a 1-10, translated by R. McKeon, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, p. 702.

⁵ See, for instance, Nancy Jay's analysis of the structure of binary oppositions that has functioned in the humanities and social sciences as self-evident, pre-eminently rational, *a priori* principles for categorizing and describing a rich multiplicity of phenomena in her essay, "Gender and Dichotomy", in *A Reader in Feminist Knowledge*, pp. 89-106.

⁶ Grosz, *Space, time and perversion: essays on the politics of bodies*, p. 42.

⁷ As Janet Price and Margarit Shildrick have observed in *Feminist Theory And the Body: A Reader*, many first wave writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and those of the early years of contemporary feminism, for instance, "saw equality as predicated on the need to go beyond the influence of biology, to stress instead the potential of women for intellectual achievement regardless of their troublesome bodies. And even those who more closely contested the determinism of biology, saw the corporeal in a decidedly negative light" (1999, 3-4).

⁸ See above, note 6.

decaying, qualities which also characterise Kristeva's representation of Gloria Harrison in *Possessions*.

Describing the marital life of Gloria and her husband Stanislas Novak, Kristeva says through the narrator St  phanie Delacour that Gloria is <<indiscr  te, bruyante, insupportable>> in her interaction with Stanislas (P 47). The implication that Gloria is irrational also appears in the description of her affair with Michael Fish after Stanislas's death, a relationship which suggests, in the speech therapist Pauline Gadeau's view, that she is a licentious woman. Bearing these negative connotations that masculinist discourse gives to the body, her body betrays her identity as a gifted translator. As St  phanie has pointed out in her reconstruction of the murder of Gloria, Gloria is proud only of her head, which she laughingly used to call <<<Mon organe sexuel>>> or <<<Mon outil de travail>>> (P 11, 271). This view of the head as being superior to the body reveals that the idea of the body, which is seen as something to be transcended in the search for rational knowledge in male theories of power, is internalised by women as well.⁹ The imprint of the mind-body dichotomy on a body that reiterates its historical association with the feminine, the female, or woman, renders Gloria a victim of culture.

The devaluation of women's status as a product of patriarchal ideology¹⁰ becomes the cause of Gloria's murder, for her killer, Pauline, finds her decision to put her own pleasure before her son Jerry's future unforgivable.¹¹ By decapitating Gloria, Pauline feels that she amputates Gloria's power, removes Gloria's distinguishing marks, since <<Un corps sans t  te n'a rien    soi, il n'y a plus de soi, on n'a donc plus rien    soi, ni sien ni sienne, ni mon ni ton, ni son – son quoi, son fils, ton fils, mon fils? Aimeric, Jerry>> (P 268). The relation of violence to the body that is associated with the mind-body dichotomy here has to do with motherhood, which is entangled in Pauline's relationship with her brother Aimeric, whom she treats as a son. The affection she feels for Aimeric in turn destroys her when she learns of Aimeric's accidental death. In other words, her desire for motherhood leads to her hatred towards Gloria, which ends in the murder of Gloria; the crime, however, develops from the signification of Gloria's body.¹²

⁹ See Genevieve Lloyd's discussion of the mind-body dichotomy that has been associated with Greek theories of knowledge in *The Man of Reason: 'Male' & 'Female' in Western Philosophy*, pp. 2-9.

¹⁰ In *Sacrificed Lives: Kristeva on Women and Violence*, Martha J. Reineke points out that Kristeva links primary patterns of sacrifice with patriarchy, a term which has disappeared from the lexicons of many feminist theorists, but which the articulation of gender asymmetry that is associated with a sacrificial economy is referenced. As she goes on to explain, "When human societies inscribe sexual difference as a resolution of the crisis of an original separation and loss that accompanies the human apprenticeship to language and culture and under threat of loss and renewed crisis, draw on that difference once again, preferentially invoking women's bodies in violent resolution of that crisis, they create patriarchy" (1997, 201).

¹¹ See my discussion about Pauline as an automaton in the second chapter of this thesis, pp. 57-58.

¹² See my discussion about the body as signification in the previous chapter, pp. 140-141.

Looking at Gloria's pallid face, <<Pauline retrouve la stupeur féroce qui l'a anéantie vingt ans plus tôt et qu'on nomma alors, quelle légèreté, une dépression>> (P 266). Her memory goes back to her holiday home in Brittany that was comparable to the Harrison house and where her brother Aimeric drowned. Aimeric's accidental death which left her feeling like a corpse comes back to her as she stands in front of the dead Gloria: <<[...] je suis un cadavre. Comme cette femme obscène qui étale devant moi, dans une flaque de sang sur le parquet, sa chair froide, cette viande offerte>> (P 267). Criticising Gloria for having Jerry but trying to destroy him by dragging him away with her into her own crazy life, Pauline confuses her present "duty" to defend Jerry from harm with her past experience of taking care of her brother Aimeric, which makes her a false self:

Elle ou moi, Aimeric ou Jerry, une lame nous broie, je la hais, je hais la mort. Une mère détruit son fils. Son fils, à qui? Son fils, à ma mère? Aimeric ou Jerry? Son fils. Mon fils. Aimeric n'était pas mon frère, je l'ai porté dans mes bras quand il était bébé, je l'ai nourri quand ma mère partait au labo, je lui ai appris à marcher, à parler, à lire. Comme à Jerry. Son fils à elle. Gloria est une mère indigne (P 267).

Her insanity is thus attributable to the desire for motherhood that, for her, is <<[un] mystère>> (P 267), because no mother is fit to be a mother. This leads Stéphanie Delacour to conclude, in her analysis of Pauline's psychology, that it is through severing Gloria's head that Pauline severs herself from the mother who drowns her son, and detaches herself from the corpse that she was but is no longer.

For Pauline then, to decapitate Gloria is in fact an act of self-destruction that is meant to lead to revival. In this sense, Gloria sacrifices her body for Pauline's search for a new body, which takes the form of learning another language, <<santabarbarois>> (P 235),¹³ after her brother Aimeric dies. Here Pauline's new identity as a consequence of her attempt to dissociate herself from her old self, of whom Gloria is the double, points to the act of violence against Gloria's body, and therefore Pauline's own body, as Gloria's sacrifice.

Given this, the boundary between violence and sacrifice in Pauline's search for a new identity is blurred since Gloria's sacrificial body can be seen as Pauline's false self. The irony of this act of self-destruction as a means to rebirth is that committing a crime does not save Pauline but suggests that she is losing her soul, yet she does not know it; her body is an instrument of the barbarousness of the city, Santa Barbara. On the other hand, Gloria's corpse becomes a witness to the political facts in Santa Barbara that, according to Stéphanie Delacour, are responsible for the soaring crime rate, as corruption denies the people <<les droits élémentaires à la santé, y

¹³ I shall discuss the relationship between body, language, origin and identity in the following section of this chapter.

compris mentale, et à la sécurité – celle des femmes et des enfants en tout premier lieu>> (P 189).

The body of signification, as illustrated by Pauline and Gloria, suggests a parallelism or isomorphism between the body and the city, which typifies one of what Elizabeth Grosz describes as the “two pervasive models of the interrelation of bodies and cities”¹⁴ in her essay “Bodies-Cities”. In this model, the body and the city “are understood as analogues, congruent counterparts, in which the features, organization and characteristics of one are also reflected in the other”.¹⁵ The city, that is the polis, which is conceptually and historically linked with the state that is the domain of politics, mirrors the body that is associated with nature. There is an underlying ideology of this model: it is a masculine encoding of the body politic. A fundamental opposition between nature and culture is what this conception of the body politic relies on. In this sense, the relationship between the body and the city in Kristeva’s representation of the theme of evil connotes the logic of violence and sacrifice related to the mind-body dichotomy, in addition to the denotation of the visible violence done to the body.

This is embodied in the love story of the couple Alba Ram and Vespasien in *Le vieil homme et les loups*. As I have discussed in the first and fifth chapters of this thesis, Vespasien manifests his destructive and murderous tendencies in his marriage with Alba. The body of the drowned woman that is Alba’s doppelgänger¹⁶ is evidence of Vespasien’s potentially criminal violence, which is a parallel reflection of the political reality of the city, Santa Barbara. In this corrupt state, people seek after power, wealth and position, which lead them to extreme violence; all they want is a certain image that has an extraordinary power to harness their anxieties and desires. This phenomenon of <<maladies de l’âme>>¹⁷ in Santa Barbara leads Alba to remind Vespasien of the fact that he is losing his soul in her quarrel with him: <<Oui, les images. Non pas: <Que vont dire les gens?> – phrase clé de nos parents, dont on commence à se moquer –,

¹⁴ Grosz, *Space, time and perversion: essays on the politics of bodies*, p. 105. In the other model, “the body and the city have a de facto or external relation. The city is a reflection, projection, or product of bodies. Bodies are conceived in naturalistic terms, pre-dating the city, the cause and motivation for its design and construction”.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ The presence of *Doppelgänger* that reflects <<le dédoublement ou la dissémination des identités>> refers, for Kristeva, <<à l’évidence de ce que nous sommes en train de vivre, cette culture moderne en pleine métamorphose>>, in *L’Infini* 37 (1992), p. 76. For a thorough study of the *Doppelgänger* theme, see Otto Rank, *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study*, in which Rank, says Freud in “The Uncanny”, “has gone into the connections which the ‘double’ has with reflections in mirrors, with shadows, with guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and with the fear of death; but he also lets in a flood of light on the surprising evolution of the idea. For the ‘double’ was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an ‘energetic denial of the power of death,’ as Rank says; and probably the ‘immortal’ soul was the first ‘double’ of the body”, in *Writings on Art and Literature*, p. 210.

¹⁷ Kristeva, *Les nouvelles maladies de l’âme*, p. 9. See my discussion in the second chapter of this thesis, p. 68.

mais la manie de se faire une image qui dure le temps d'un journal ou d'un spot>> (VH 61). For her, Vespasien, too, wants an image. To that, Vespasien replies, <<Peux m'en passer. Pas mon métier. Le spectacle n'est quand même pas un crime>> (VH 61). He further refutes Alba's diagnosis of a <<maladies de l'âme>> phenomenon in Santa Barbara by saying <<Nous sommes un monde en mutation>> (VH 62). However, for Alba, that world is <<La hâte du profit, plus la paresse. Jouir à tout prix ne produit que des monstres>> (VH 62).¹⁸

The interrelation between the body and the city in the fight to the death between Alba and Vespasien involves the notion of a false self that, as discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis, is <<Un corps qui agit, le plus souvent même sans la joie de cette ivresse performative>>.¹⁹ With their craze for creating an image of themselves, people in Santa Barbara are devoid of what Kristeva talks of as <<la représentation psychique>> in *Les nouvelles maladies de l'âme* and are thus hindered from <<la vie sensorielle, sexuelle, intellectuelle>> (1993, 19). Moreover, <<cette carence de la représentation psychique>> <<peut porter atteinte au fonctionnement biologique lui-même>> (1993, 19), which again points to the idea of the inhabitants of Santa Barbara as false selves. Here these false selves not only fall victim to but also are inscribed within the barbarities of the city, Santa Barbara.

The dissolution of the boundary between violence and sacrifice in the interrelation between the body and the city, which is implicated in the notion of a false self, is incarnated in the ultramodern fountain under Alba and Vespasien's habitation.²⁰ The fountain that is <<[un] dernier cri de l'art figuratif>> (VH 74) and which has been built at the foot of Alba and Vespasien's high-rise building represents power to Alba and Vespasien, because not everyone has one under their window. The structure of the fountain, however, suggests how one is prey to the search for an image of oneself. As Alba's friend Stéphanie Delacour remembers,

Au milieu du bassin, des sculptures colorisées représentaient les membres disloqués d'une créature qui aurait pu passer pour l'épouse de Gulliver chez les Lilliputiens que nous sommes: un œil géant, un nez énorme, une bouche rouge découvrant des dents blancheur d'évier, des seins gonflés au silicone, une croupe d'ondine capable d'abattre le mont Blanc d'un coup de queue, sans oublier le chapeau de paille de la belle ogresse et son ombrelle du diamètre d'une grande roue (VH 75).

The disjointed limbs of a being in the middle of the pool is analogous to Vespasien's false self, who is a victim of desire for power and who oppresses Alba. If we associate this image of the

¹⁸ See my discussion about monsters in Kristeva's novels and their relation to her notion of the abject in the third chapter of this thesis, pp. 82-90.

¹⁹ Kristeva, *Les nouvelles maladies de l'âme*, p. 16.

²⁰ Kristeva in her interview with Bernard Sichère on *Le vieil homme et les loups* remarks that the fountain <<ressemble étrangement à celle du centre Beaubourg>>, in *L'Infini* 37 (1992), p. 76.

disjointed limbs of this being with the body of the drowned woman that is Alba's doppelgänger, the image of Alba's mutilated body looms out of her violent relationship with Vespasien. These images of bodies in pieces convey that the fountain is what Anna Smith calls "a piece, part of the world's 'unbroken flesh'" in *Julia Kristeva: Readings of Exile and Estrangement* (1996, 194). All of us, according to Smith, "are passing through [the fountain] on the way to death, bound to each other out of necessity, whether from hatred or love, and all in tearing the world's flesh tear our own" (1996, 194). This act of self-destruction likens us to Vespasien's false self, of which the fountain is symbolic. As Vespasien's false self is Alba's oppressor, the fountain can also be seen as Alba's sacrificial body, which blurs the boundary between violence and sacrifice.

Vespasien's false self, which is inscribed within and falls victim to the barbarities of the city, Santa Barbara, in dissolving the boundary between violence and sacrifice, further complicates the logic of violence and sacrifice in the interrelation between the body and the city. His sacrificial body, which is a parallel reflection of the violence of the political facts in Santa Barbara, embodies the violence of the mind-body dichotomy, since the conception of the body politic in the interrelation between the body and the city is predicated upon a fundamental opposition between nature and culture. The association of his sacrificial body with maladies of the soul that connote certain types of psychic structures in turn reproduces the body of masculinist discourse; this body also inhabits the art dealer Michael Fish's body in *Possessions*.

As Stéphanie Delacour has pointed out in her reflection on Michael Fish's role in the murder of Gloria, he is an inbred criminal:

Le marchand de tableaux était grand, solide et sec [...] Sa force physique avait toujours dépassé sa force psychique. Révélant une personnalité caractérielle dès le plus jeune âge, il avait su utiliser ce déséquilibre en montant des affaires à la fois risquées et louches, grâce à une brutalité naturelle et à un flair très sûr pour détecter précisément l'absence de brutalité chez l'adversaire. Achats d'entreprises en faillite, transferts de capitaux douteux, liens probables avec la mafia, sur lesquels les dirigeants santabarbarois de tous bords fermaient pudiquement les yeux sous prétexte de ne pas entraver le renouveau économique du pays (P 179-180).

Clearly, Fish's body is a parallel reflection of the political facts in Santa Barbara, which deprive him of psychic life. His false self then exercises violence over his lover Gloria. The tempestuous life of Fish and Gloria is recounted through Stéphanie, and illustrates the war between the sexes. Meanwhile Gloria's housekeeper Hester Bellini suggests how greedy and wicked Fish is when Captain Rilsky interrogates her about the murder of Gloria: <<Il n'en voulait qu'à son argent, à son héritage et à ses tableaux>> (P 152). This culminates in his strangling Gloria. Hence, Gloria's body is evidence of the way Fish falls victim to his own false self which is in turn a victim of maladies of the soul.

The interrelation between the body and the city in the way Fish echoes Vespasien's false self is linked with Kristeva's representation of love stories. Violence as part of the themes of Kristeva's discourses of "The War Between the Sexes" has to do with maternity and reproduction, which is the downfall of the painter, the once-intellectual anthropologist, Martin Cazenave in *Les Samouraïs*. As is clear in his war with Carole, his obsession with having a child with Carole, who turns him down, results in his becoming a false self:

Carole le regardait projeter du vert, du rouge, du jaune sur la toile posée à même le sol. Esquisser avec le pinceau, dans ces nuages de couleur, des yeux en colère, des bouches crispées, ou peut-être simplement des ronds, des cailloux, des pavés. Il se caressait? Giflait quelqu'un, le lacérait, le massacrait? Ou enseménçait-il la toile, faute de féconder une femme? Il faisait l'amour sans que personne ne s'en protège ni ne lui résiste, seul devant personne, big-bang de néant? Après tout, il en avait le droit. Comme elle avait le droit d'être stérile (LS 139).

The implication that Martin is on the verge of a breakdown points to the fact that he suffers from lack of psychic life, a fact which likens him to Vespasien in *Le vieil homme et les loups* and Michael Fish in *Possessions*. His destructive and murderous tendencies, which are hidden in his painting, erupt when he stalks Carole in London, where she attends a conference.

As Carole writes in a letter to her friend Olga,

J'accompagnais Ilya Romanski à Trafalgar Square, on venait de sortir du musée, on faisait le tour innocent des touristes, avec pigeons sur les épaules mais sans photographes, quand même: un moment de détente à la place d'une séance qu'on a manquée. Brusquement, Martin surgit, me bouscule et se met à hurler, en pleine crise de folie. Il me traite de tous les noms: j'étais une traînée, je couchais avec Romanski et le reste du congrès, l'hôtel Russell où étaient descendus les congressistes était un lupanar, j'étais devenue cinglée, nymphomane, je devrais consulter Lauzun, non, Lauzun est trop fort pour moi, Joëlle Cabarus ferait l'affaire, et ainsi de suite! L'abjection (LS 275).

Here, Carole falls prey to Martin's false self, who, according to their friend Frank, is a victim of maladies of the soul. Studying under the direction of the psychoanalyst Joëlle Cabarus's husband Arnaud and preparing to become a psychoanalyst himself, Frank <<pense que Martin est d'un narcissisme trop fragile, et qu'il ne connaît pas son vrai désir [...], qu'il aurait dû faire une analyse>> (LS 278). Not undergoing psychotherapy, as Frank goes on to suggest, exposes Martin to being perpetually tossed from one passion to another, one death to another. This is illustrated by his friendship with Scherner's friends, who are a special kind of friend: <<culte du corps, très hard, pantalons et vestes cuir, chaînes, bondages, S.M. et le reste>> (LS 278). His self-destructive behaviour associates his false self with the body of masculinist discourse that has been denigrated as weak, immoral, unclean, or decaying.

The reiteration of the body's historical function in the bodies of the male characters

undermines a sex/gender dichotomy; men too have lost their bodies to the phallic economy which is premised on a logic of metaphorical substitution that always returns to the Phallus.²¹ By exposing how Western culture sacrifices the body for the mind through the bodies of the male characters, as well as the female characters, in her novels, Kristeva seems to suggest that to counteract the masculinist fear and rejection of the body is not to turn a blind eye to body matters, which was a characteristic feature – though not exclusively – of liberal feminist perspectives that see equality as the goal for women, but to turn to them. Such recognition of the force of body politics can be compared with the current of feminism that focuses on the body in a move to reclaim and give positive meaning to the feminine as a theoretical concept in the development of feminist theories of the body. The early work of Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, which is representative of that current's attempt to theorise the female body as a constructive force, will constitute part of the theoretical background in the following analysis of Kristeva's attempt to bring the body back into discourse in the human sciences.

Textualising the Body “Feminine”

To confront the culture in which masculinity is in retreat from the body and where disembodiment is privileged, Cixous and Irigaray put forward the project of writing “woman” to revalorise the way in which femininity is inscribed onto the female form. For Cixous, femininity is a matter of representation, so it is crucial for women to write these bodies that have been left out of Western culture's “masculine” economy of the Same. She tries to imagine a “feminine” writing that expresses/creates a feminine libidinal economy. This new economy of representation is not built on the representation of the feminine but is a new unconscious, a feminine

²¹ The Phallus is Lacan's notion of desire, which functions both as the desire of the mother and the Law of the Father. The mother desires the Phallus because she has come under the Law of the Father. The Law of the Father is erected upon the desire of the mother. Without her desire there would be no need for the Law. This distinction phallus/lack of phallus is the heart of the language system, from which follow the other differences that form our language system male/female, head/heart, culture/nature, sane/mad and so on. The Phallus is a signifier that signifies signification. For more on Lacan's notion of desire, see his <<La signification du phallus>> in *Écrits*, pp. 685-695.

unconscious. The need to create a new unconscious involves counterbalancing the unconscious²² that circulates in psychoanalytic discourse as a product of a masculine imaginary. The unconscious, for Cixous, is a cultural product; a new unconscious thus can be created through appropriating language. As she writes in <<Le rire de la méduse>> in *L'arc*,

Si la femme a toujours fonctionné < dans > le discours de l'homme, signifiant toujours renvoyé à l'adverse signifiant qui en annihile l'énergie spécifique, en rabat ou étouffe les sons si différents, il est temps qu'elle disloque ce < dans >, qu'elle l'explose, le retourne et s'en saisisse, qu'elle le fasse sien, le comprenant, le prenant dans sa bouche à elle, que de ses dents à elle elle lui morde la langue, qu'elle s'invente une langue pour lui rentrer dedans. Et avec quelle aisance, tu verras, elle peut depuis ce < dans > où elle était tapie somnolente, sourdre aux lèvres qu'elle va déborder de ses écumes (1975, 49).

Her concept of a new unconscious that will dislocate the Unconscious is a text that has neither origin nor end, a text with several beginnings, a text that goes on and on. For a feminine text, which she tries to create in <<Le sexe ou la tête?>> in *Les cahiers du GRIF*, "can't be predicted, isn't predictable, isn't knowable [...]: it really is the text of the unforeseeable".²³ This tactile text that is "close to the voice, very close to the flesh"²⁴ is a manifesto calling upon women to write their bodies because feminine writing derives from the body.

This "body" of Cixous's is reminiscent of Irigaray's self-touching "two lips" that characterise female morphology in *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*. In her "labial politics", Irigaray places great emphasis on the multiple forms of the embodied feminine and on the fluidity that marks the inherent excess of the feminine: <<Être produit, sorti, de nos bouches. Entre tes/mes

²² See Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, in which he gives a plain account of Lacan's notion of the unconscious. Briefly, "Lacan [...] regards the unconscious as structured like a language. This is not only because it works by metaphor and metonymy: it is also because, like language itself for the post-structuralists, it is composed less of *signs* – stable meanings – than of *signifiers*" (1996, 146). Thus, it "is a particular effect of language, a process of desire set in motion by difference. When we enter the symbolic order, we enter into language itself; yet this language, for Lacan as for the structuralists, is never something entirely within our individual control. On the contrary, [it] is what internally *divides* us, rather than an instrument we are confidently able to manipulate. Language always pre-exists us: it is always already 'in place', waiting to assign us *our* places within it. It is ready and waiting for us rather as our parents are; and we shall never wholly dominate it or subdue it to our own ends, just as we shall never be able entirely to shake off the dominant role which our parents play in our constitution. Language, the unconscious, the parents, the symbolic order: these terms in Lacan are not exactly synonymous, but they are intimately allied. They are sometimes spoken of by him as the 'Other' – as that which like language is always anterior to us and will always escape us, that which brought us into being as subjects in the first place but which always outruns our grasp [...] for Lacan our unconscious desire is directed towards this Other, in the shape of some ultimately gratifying reality which we can never have; but it is also true for Lacan that our desire is in some way always *received* from the Other too. We desire what others – our parents, for instance – unconsciously desire for us; and desire can only happen because we are caught up in linguistic, sexual and social relations – the whole field of the 'Other' – which generate it" (1996, 150-151).

²³ Translated by Annette Kuhn as "Castration or Decapitation?", *Sings: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7, 1 (1981), p. 53.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

lèvres plusieurs chants, plusieurs dires, toujours se répondent. Sans que l'un, l'une, soit jamais séparable de l'autre. Tu/je: font toujours plusieurs à la fois>> (1977, 208-209). The material forms of which Irigaray speaks here, like those of which Cixous speaks in her texts that can be defined as feminine, are never given but are created through writing that involves a set of discursive strategies. This feminine writing is a body that is never one, in which the fixed parameters of sex and gender that position the physical body are erased. The textual woman created by writers of *écriture féminine* in turn can be related to the Kristevan concept of woman, who can never be defined. As Kristeva explains in her interview with *psych & po*,

une femme, cela ne peut pas *être*: c'est même ce qui ne va pas dans l'*être* [...] J'entends donc par <<femme>> ce qui ne se représente pas, ce qui ne se dit pas, ce qui reste en dehors des nominations et des idéologies. Certains <<hommes>> en savent quelque chose aussi, c'est même ce que les textes modernes dont nous parlions tout à l'heure n'arrêtent pas de signifier: d'éprouver les deux bords du langage et de la socialité – la loi et sa transgression, la maîtrise et la jouissance –, sans que l'une soit pour les mâles et l'autre pour les femelles pourvu qu'on n'en parle pas.²⁵

This woman who does not exist as such not only takes the form of writing but also of art in Kristeva's textual analysis of modernist discourse, which she also applies to her representation of the painting and fountain in her novels.

Here the painting and fountain, in which the textual woman is re-inscribed, are associated with the sacrificial bodies of the male characters Martin Cazenave and Vespasien. Suffering from maladies of the soul, Martin captures his false self, which desires to impregnate Carole, in his painting. The clouds of colour that he casts onto canvas represent something that cannot be represented, something that is not said, which is a different type of language.²⁶ This textualisation of his body that, as discussed, has been left out of Western culture's "masculine" economy of the Same is a figure which gives birth to the unsaid feminine or the return of the repressed, for he is not afraid of transgressing <<l'Unité>> that is <<un mal>> (LS 137). As he says to Carole with regard to his desire for parenthood, a desire which causes him to abandon anthropology for painting: <<Tu ne comprends pas ça? Se disperser, sortir de notre petite cohérence de cons: telle est l'expérience à laquelle les gens ne se risquent pas, ici, parce qu'ils ont peur de jouir>> (LS 137). The implication that (sexual) pleasure resides in the courage one has to be different is present in the painting. As composition of the textual woman and a man, the painting then rewrites sexual difference beyond the binary of masculine/feminine, constituting an example of a "bisexuality" that does not deny difference in Cixous and Irigaray's conception of

²⁵ In *Polylogue*, p. 519.

²⁶ See the fourth chapter of this thesis, p. 120.

textualising the body “feminine”.²⁷

The counterpart of Martin’s painting is the ultramodern fountain that is textualisation of Vespasien’s sacrificial body in *Le vieil homme et les loups*. The discursive elements of the fountain, like the clouds of colours in Martin’s painting, are a figure for the unsaid feminine or the return of the repressed. This representation of a feminine unconscious that disrupts the unconscious is implicit in the idea of the body of the novelist Jonathan Swift’s character Gulliver’s wife (VH 75). Through her disjointed limbs which are analogous to the characteristics of the unsaid feminine as disruptive and fragmentary, she, as the double of Vespasien’s false self, becomes symbolic of the textual woman. The coexistence of the textual woman with the man Vespasien in the ultramodern fountain in turn can be related to Martin’s painting which embodies the Cixousian and Irigarayan concept of bisexuality. Both examples of rewriting sexual difference beyond the binary of masculine/feminine can also be seen as Kristeva’s redefinition of her theory that “woman” can never be defined.

The comparison of painting with the textual woman also appears in the novel *Possessions*, but the way in which it redefines Kristeva’s “different” intellectual project is through the representational rather than the non-representational. This painting is Picasso’s <<*La Femme à la collerette*>> (P 122), which Michael Fish’s false self steals from his victim Gloria Harrison and which connotes appalling violence against women. As the newspaper editor Larry Smirnoff suggests in his reading of the painting, a reading which aims to establish a relationship between the painting and the murder of Gloria:

Tout compte fait, c’est bien ce que je me disais: les femmes de Picasso m’ont toujours eu l’air sorties des mains d’un assassin. Des têtes tailladées posées sur une collerette comme sur un plateau. *Le serial killer* n’aura pas pu s’empêcher d’y voir une représentation de ses fantasmes. Raison de plus pour le subtiliser (P 122).

This reading of the painting textualises Gloria’s decapitated body which does not exist as such in the painting. The disfigured women, who are redolent of the clouds of colours in Martin’s painting in *Les Samouraïs*, give feminine elements to the body that is not yet one, through which a connection between the painting and the ultramodern fountain in *Le vieil homme et les loups* is established. All of this, in representing Cixous’s concept of a feminine text, restates the complexity of the logic of violence and sacrifice that forms Kristeva’s delineation of the body.

In terms of the relation of violence to the body, the paintings and the ultramodern fountain destabilise its association with the mind-body dichotomy by bringing into being what has not yet been written. On an ontological level, however, they embody extreme violence

²⁷ For Irigaray bisexuality is two different sexes engaging with their difference, whereas for Cixous bisexuality means the location within oneself of difference, of two sexes.

against the female bodies: Martin's painting conceals his intention to assault Carole; the ultramodern fountain mirrors the battered Alba; and Picasso's painting is the embodiment of the murder of Gloria. The imaginary relationship between text and body here is involved in the war between the sexes, which is the cause of the real, biological Gloria's death in *Possessions*. As I have discussed, coveting Gloria's property and money leads Michael Fish to suffocate Gloria, although unintentionally, whereupon Pauline Gadeau decapitates Gloria. Pauline's derangement stems from her will to protect Gloria's son, Jerry, who brings back Pauline's memory of her drowned brother Aimeric. A discussion about that memory will lead into the question of the relationship between language and body.

The loss of Aimeric, who is more a son than a brother to Pauline, destroys Pauline, but her bereavement, as her childhood friend, the Frenchwoman Odile Allart, reminisces in a conversation with St phanie Delacour, lasts only three years. After a couple of years in a mental hospital, where she receives the antidepressants and electroshock treatments, Pauline makes a new life for herself by changing languages:

<Elle s'est mise au santabarbarois et   l'orthophonie: sa fa on   elle de rena tre, de retrouver le contact avec l'enfance. Il para t que l'id e lui est venue en psychoth rapie. Personnellement, je [i.e. Odile] ne crois pas aux psy-quelque-chose, de la magie tout  a, pass e de mode d'ailleurs, je suis trop *matter of fact*, vous comprenez, mais j'avoue que, pour Pauline,  a a march    fond> (P 235).

The idea that one can be born anew in another language conveys a different approach to the relationship between language and body from Cixous's and Irigaray's in their projects of writing the body. The body to which another language gives birth here is a real, biological entity,²⁸ not an imaginary construct that is characterised by poetic style; and the interaction between language and body can be seen as a "different" type of discourse of maternity.

As St phanie remarks in her examination of Pauline's trauma,

Certains deuils laissent un choix aux individus qu'ils abattent: se p trifier ou muer. Devenir folle ou changer de langue. La mort cadav ris e ou la mort qui vit d'une vie greff e. Pauline poss dait une intelligence et une ma trise de soi aussi exceptionnelles que sa passion pour Aimeric. Elle avait eu la force de choisir la greffe: langue  trang re, plus exil. M chante chirurgie qui vous sectionne les racines, op rant une f condation artificielle. Dans vingt pour cent des cas, il en r sulte une grossesse heureuse: la manipulation linguistique – comme la g n tique – produisant son embryon, la suicidaire Pauline rev cut une vie de soignante (P 237).

The result of the penetration of a foreign language into Pauline's body as a successful pregnancy likens Pauline to the Virgin mother, who is impregnated by the Word, the Name of the Father, or

²⁸ I shall discuss Kristeva's theory of the body in the following section of this chapter.

God. Compared with the pregnant women, Olga Morena in *Les Samouraïs* and Gloria Harrison, who are the reincarnations of the Virgin mother in Kristeva's discourses of maternity in the previous chapter, Pauline better fits the description of what Kristeva calls the cult of <<la Vierge>> in <<Stabat Mater>> in *Histoires d'amour* in that she has no *jouissance*;²⁹ her body is marked with the Name of the Father. What follows addresses how she as the Virgin mother embodies the representative of <<un <retour du refoulé>> semiotics in Kristeva's new tales of the Virgin Mary (1983, 313). More importantly, we shall look at how she as a virgin reiterates the Dark Continent motif that suggests, for Hélène Cixous, the subversive potential of all women.

The cult of the Virgin, argues Kristeva in <<Stabat Mater>>, represents no more than <<l'appropriation masculine du Maternel>>, which is only <<un fantasme recouvrant le narcissisme primaire>> (1983, 297). This fantasy of the Immaculate Conception does away with the act of <<un plaisir qui fonde son [i.e. le Christ] origine>>³⁰ and the mother's *jouissance* that might accompany it. In this way, the god-child excludes the mother's *jouissance* from the fantasy of the Virgin birth. The Virgin's only pleasure is her child who is not hers alone but everyone's, while her silent sorrow is hers alone. By using the cult of the Virgin, Western patriarchy has covered up the unsettling aspects of maternity and the mother-child relationship. For, as Kristeva points out in <<Stabat Mater>>, <<l'attribut <vierge> pour Marie soit une erreur de traduction, le traducteur ayant remplacé le terme sémitique désignant le statut socio-légal d'une jeune fille non mariée>> (1983, 298). In other words, the potential *jouissance* of the Virgin mother, in Kristeva's view, is not confined within the social sanctions of marriage; it is, as her critic Kelly Oliver defines in her reading of <<Stabat Mater>>, "an outlaw *jouissance* that does not come under paternal control, the remnants of a matrilinear society where the resulting child can take the name of only the mother".³¹ However, this *jouissance* of the Virgin mother and her child, which presents a threat to the paternal function of the Symbolic order, is brought under the control of the image of the Virgin. As a result, the cult of the Virgin controls maternity and mothers by doing

²⁹ Leon Roudiez in his notes on Kristeva's terminology in the introduction to *Desire in Language* says, "The English word 'jouissance' rests in dictionaries, forgotten by all save a few Renaissance scholars. The *OED* attests that it was still used by eighteenth-century poets – e.g., William Dodd, in a 1767 poem. In *Webster 2*, one of the words used to define 'jouissance' is 'enjoyment.' Indeed, the two words share a common etymology, and a few centuries ago both French and English cognates had similar denotations covering the field of law and the activity of sex. While the English term has lost most of its sexual connotations, the French one has kept *all* of its earlier meanings. Kristeva gives 'jouissance' a meaning closely related to that given the word by Jacques Lacan (see the introduction to part two of this thesis, p. 105). In Kristeva's vocabulary, sensual, sexual pleasure is covered by *plaisir*; 'jouissance' is total joy or ecstasy (without any mystical connotation); also through the working of the signifier, this implies the presence of meaning (*jouissance* = *j'ouïs sens* = I heard meaning), requiring it by going beyond it" (1980, 15-16).

³⁰ Kristeva, *Au commencement était l'amour: Psychanalyse et foi*, p. 65.

³¹ Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*, p. 51.

violence to them.

Although the cult of the Virgin can control the maternal semiotic, it cannot contain the semiotic. Kristeva argues in *Au commencement était l'amour* that Christianity, with its Virgin birth, while protecting the paternal function, unravels it (1997, 62-63); the cult of the Virgin contains the violence of semiotic drives by turning violence against them. The Virgin mother, whose silent ear, milk, and tears are <<les métaphores du non-langage, d'un <sémiotique> que la communication linguistique ne recouvre pas>>, as Kristeva suggests in <<Stabat Mater>>, becomes the representative of <<un <retour du refoulé>>> semiotics (1983, 312, 313). This is embodied in her fictional representation of Pauline's suffering that cannot be expressed in words, in which the relationship between Pauline and Gloria is involved:

Une femme [i.e. Gloria] impuissante, déprimée, c'est ça, une mère, voilà le mystère. Comme moi [i.e. Pauline]. Je hais. La haine ne fait pas qu'implorer, blanc brasier qui me consume depuis vingt ans déjà, pleurs, insomnies, envies niées, jalousies repassées, colères muées en soins (P 267).

The pain Pauline feels associates her body, that cannot ultimately be represented, with the concept of the feminine. As the embodiment of the feminine, Pauline's body is a body of signification, in which the early work of Cixous and Irigaray is present. At this point Kristeva's new tales of the Virgin Mary take on the textual woman, which is reminiscent of her concept of <<Le Trou de la Vierge>> (LS 346) in her representation of the theme of narcissism that is related to her theory of love in *Les Samourais*.³² This leads into the psychoanalytic theory of the Dark Continent that embodies men's fear of their own forbidden sexual desires, an idea which suggests the subversive potential of all women to Cixous in her article <<Le rire de la méduse>>.

Addressing her women readers, Cixous writes, <<[...] tu es Afrique, tu es noire. Ton continent est noir. Le noir est dangereux. Dans le noir tu ne vois rien, tu as peur>> (1975, 41). The fears women have for the dark points to the fact that they have internalised male theories of the female body; this makes them the embodiment of <<l'infâme logique de l'antiamour>> (1975, 41). Yet what is theirs breaks loose from them without their fearing any debilitation. As Cixous explains,

nos regards s'en vont, nos sourires filent, les rires de toutes nos bouches, nos sangs coulent et nous nous répandons sans nous épuiser, nos pensées, nos signes, nos écrits, nous ne les retenons pas et nous ne craignons pas de manquer.

Bonheur à nous, les moises, les écartées de la scène des héritages, nous nous inspirons et nous nous expirons sans essoufflement, nous sommes partout! (1975, 41)

The Dark Continent as the source of feminine writing that can unlock women from a history

³² See the first chapter of this thesis, pp. 38-44.

Cixous labels as exclusively male conveys the complex relationship between origin, body and language. This can be related to Kristeva's fictional representation of Pauline as a Virgin mother in *Possessions*, although the association of Pauline's body with the textual woman is in conflict with the essence of feminine writing as joyful and celebrating.

Here the presence of Kristeva's new tales of the Virgin Mary in the story of Pauline lies in Pauline's search for a new identity, a search which enables her to get over her mourning for the loss of her brother superficially. The seeming success she has in seeking a new identity is reflected in her adoption of the language, <<santabarbarois>> (P 235), which problematises her French origins. Language as a form of one's identity textualises one's body; the body as a text in turn reiterates Cixous and Irigaray's quest for the feminine that is a representation of biology as volatile, as "a mutable intertexture – a discursive effect".³³ The idea of biology rewriting itself, which is implicated in the issue of one's origins, is likened to <<une grosseesse heureuse>> in the story of Pauline (P 237). This makes Pauline a reincarnation of the Virgin mother, whose body is a hole that signifies, for the writer Hervé Sinteuil in *Les Samouraïs*, the Virgin's destiny as to free <<l'humanité de son obsession érotique>> (LS 347). At this point the hole of the Virgin can be compared with the Dark Continent which, in colonial terms, implies virgin territories eager for penetration.³⁴ The female body as a sexualised zone conflates the real body with the Cixousian concept of biology or the Dark Continent as the scene of writing/reading, a concept which the feminist critic Kadiatu Kanneh criticises for only managing "to lock all women into a history free-floating between images of black subjection and imperialist domination".³⁵ To unravel the problematics of bringing the body back into discourses in the human sciences is thus needed, which is the objective of the following section.

Sexualising the Textual Woman

Without a substance, the Cixousian concept of the body, like corporeality in Irigaray's writing, is to be understood as a decidedly literary evocation. This, as Vicki Kirby has pointed out in her essay "*Corpus Delicti: The Body at the Scene of Writing*", raises the question of what "the nomination 'biological or anatomical body'" refers to (1991, 9). In her view,

[There is a] pervasive belief that the anatomical body is indeed the unarguably real body, the literal body, the body whose immovable and immobilising substance must be secured

³³ Vicki Kirby, "*Corpus Delicti: The Body at the Scene of Writing*", in *Cartographies. Poststructuralism and the Mapping of Bodies and Spaces*, p. 98.

³⁴ See my discussion about the implications of the Dark Continent for the relationship between French feminist theory and post-colonial (feminist) theory in the first chapter of this thesis, pp. 38-44.

³⁵ Kanneh, "Love, Mourning and Metaphor: Terms of Identity", in *New Feminist Discourses: Critical Essays on Theories and Texts*, p. 145.

outside the discussion. This improper body is quarantined for fear that its ineluctable immediacy will leave us no space for change, no chance to be otherwise, no place from which to engender a different future (1991, 9).

Her understanding of the textual woman expresses most Anglo-American feminists' doubts about Cixous's and Irigaray's project of writing the body. Yet the implication that Cixous and Irigaray are trapped in biological essentialism undermines the fact that they use anatomical figures to renew thought, to move the body out of its ideological ruts, by which they undo the violence of the mind-body dichotomy. This leads Jane Gallop to suggest that "feminist literary criticism, which is to say American feminist literary criticism represents, in [her] worst projections, a naïve reduction of literature to an image of the real world, operating a castration of 'the literary thing'".³⁶ The ontological approach to masculinist discourse of the body, which is characteristic of American feminists' attitude towards women's movement, may point to American feminists as less oriented towards theory but is significant for the attempt to connect body and mind, nature and culture, within the real body. This attempt is the focus of the following section of this chapter.

At issue in this attempt to bring the real body back into discourses in the human sciences is to "think the mind-body split *through the body* physically rather than metaphysically",³⁷ to quote Gallop. This real body within which the mind-body split is inscribed is related to strangling, a crime which, according to Gallop, is "a more accurate figure [than decapitation] for the 'cruel disorganization' that prevents us from thinking through the body".³⁸ Without actually severing head from body, strangling exemplifies the mind-body split within the body. The neck that is a bridge between head and body within the body thus acts as a boundary between culture and nature, whose interaction is reminiscent of Kristeva's theorisation of a signifying process. As I have discussed throughout the thesis, the Kristevan concept of a signifying process consists of the interaction between the symbolic that is associated with culture and the semiotic that is associated with the maternal body and therefore with nature.

The presence of the Kristevan concept of a signifying process in the real body ushers in Kristeva's theory of the body in *Les nouvelles maladies de l'âme*. As she says in her discussion about <<la notion freudienne de *pulsion*: charnière entre le <soma> et la <psyché>, entre la biologie et la représentation>>,

La pulsion est le niveau ultime d'organisation et de permanence auquel parviennent l'écoute et la théorie freudienne, c'est-à-dire la construction (ou l'imagination) analytique. Car ce que nous entendons de la biologie est ... pulsion: énergie, si l'on veut,

³⁶ Gallop, *Thinking Through the Body*, p. 93.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 1.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

mais toujours déjà <porteuse de sens> et <relation> à quelqu'un d'autre, fût-ce le moi-même (1993, 53-54).

The idea that bodily drives are discharged in representation and that the logic of signification is already operating in the material body points to the connection between mind and body, culture and nature, within the real body. By relating the mind-body dichotomy to the real body, the Kristevan theory of the body, like Gallop's concept of thinking "the mind-body split *through the body* physically", provides a basis for sexualising the textual woman. This sexual politics, which embraces a textual politics, about the body then poses a problem to the debate between Anglo-American feminism that emphasises the difficulty of providing a positive theorisation of the body and French feminist theory that focuses on reclaiming and giving positive meaning to the body.

In relation to Kristeva's novels, the function of sexualising the textual woman finds its expression in the (counter-)representation of the body, of which the murder of Gloria Harrison in *Possessions* is an example. Thinking through Gloria's body after her lover Michael Fish strangles her, the speech therapist Pauline Gadeau explains the frailty of the neck:

Allez savoir pourquoi c'est le cou qui prend de l'âge le premier. Les amants y flairent les parfums les plus suaves, encore ambrés du suc viscéral, mais allégés par l'attraction des yeux, du jour. Les nourrissons s'y nichent, préférant ces vallonnements aérés à la tiédeur sibylline des seins et des ventres. La tête lui impose son poids, verticale aberration juchée en équilibre surnaturel au sommet d'une tige qui s'obstine à défier la pesanteur ainsi que la souplesse horizontale des quadrupèdes. On ne sait pas combien il est fatigant de tenir debout avec amants, bébés, et une tête qui doit penser à tout! Cumul agréable parfois, glorieux si l'on veut, mais fatigant, très fatigant. Le cou s'en ressent, il assure, accuse. Le cou est l'organe le plus surnoisement, le plus monstrueusement féminin. À l'opposé du gros orteil qui, dans les deux sexes, accumule les souffrances du corps pesant et trahit les misères du caractère, le cou – chez les femmes seulement – ajoute aux usures masculines les indices d'un esprit lâche ainsi que ceux d'une vie sans issue. Et finit par révéler cette tendance perpétuelle à s'effondrer qu'on appelle stupidité – toute-puissance de l'inertie et du laisser-aller. Impossible à maquiller, il faudrait lifter, couper, recoudre. Ou simplement enlever, trancher (P 269-270).

The idea that the neck can just be lopped off because <<[il] est l'organe le plus surnoisement, le plus monstrueusement féminin>> reinforces the impulse Michael Fish feels to strangle Gloria. Both strangling and decapitation embody what Gallop calls the "cruel disorganization" that prevents us from thinking through the body, although the presence of the mind-body split in decapitation is not within the body. In terms of strangling as a figure for the mind-body dichotomy, it allows us to think through the body that is "a surface on which social law, morality, and values are inscribed",³⁹ writes Elizabeth Grosz. This real body in the story of Gloria does not

³⁹ Grosz, "Bodies and Knowledges: Feminism and the Crisis of Reason", in *Space, time and perversion: essays on the politics of bodies*, p. 33.

rid itself of the violence of the mind-body dichotomy. Thus, in thinking through Gloria's body, the textual woman that can never be defined comes into existence, while women, whose oppression is grounded on it, are clearly victims of culture.

The sexualisation of the textual politics of French feminist theory and textualisation of the sexual politics of Anglo-American feminism shed a positive light on granting women a position *congruous* with but independent of men. Yet this destabilisation of the distinction between the intellectual and the political within the domain of feminist literary criticism and theory does not actualise through the body that is associated with reality. In other words, Gloria's corpse exists only in the novel, which calls into question the possibility of sexualising the textual woman by thinking through it. This, however, has to be looked at in conjunction with the argument that Kristeva's fictional characters possess the function of reflecting social realities. In this case, Gloria is the fictional double of Kristeva, who experiences the changes in contemporary society. The collapse in the former Communist countries of Europe and the malaise of society in the West are the backdrops for the evils of the city, Santa Barbara, in the novel,⁴⁰ of which the murder of Gloria is indicative. Through the fictionalisation of the reality of contemporary society, the violence of the mind-body dichotomy of European philosophical tradition is present. For Gloria's corpse carries the negative connotations masculinist discourse gives to the body. The reiteration of masculinist conceptions of women in turn allows the narrator Stéphanie Delacour to pinpoint how discourse of the body becomes oppressive. As she demonstrates in her rumination on the tragic death of Gloria, Gloria is made <<presque anonyme>> without her head that is the tool of her trade (P 11). This strategy of using the framework of rationalist universal ethics for showing the violence of the framework itself is even more telling in Stéphanie's sentiment on rape, prompted by the picture of the female painter Artemisia Gentileschi.

Reminiscing about a dream that involves Artemisia's picture, Stéphanie challenges feminist study of that picture which applauds Artemisia's talent for painting a man being raped and beheaded by Artemisia herself as retaliation against her rapist. The suggestion, by feminists, that Artemisia is a gifted artist because of her approach to violence against women appears to Stéphanie to be an idealisation of Artemisia's picture, since the question Artemisia raises in her picture is: <<qui viole qui? Artemisia fut-elle une putain, un jouet ou un génie?>> (P 171) This reading of the picture emphasises the fact that Artemisia rapes a man, a fact which associates her with the image of a fallen woman. That image is supported by the reconciliation between her and her rapist in reality:

⁴⁰ Kristeva, <<Roman noir et temps présent>>, *L'Infini* 37 (1992), p. 76.

Sans oublier le scandale que fut, paraît-il, au début du XVII^e siècle, le viol de la même Artemisia par un peintre de l'atelier paternel, un dénommé Orazio qui, dénoncé bien tard par le père de la violée, fut traîné en justice avant que les amants ne se réconcilient, semble-t-il, assez mystérieusement, dans la foulée du procès. Affaire douteuse s'il en fut: maître et disciple, père et fille, violeur et violée (P 171).

The implication that Artemisia is not an innocent rape victim reflects, from a feminist perspective, how women have internalised the masculinist myth of the female body as being rapable. Rape, considered an abuse of power in materialist feminist analysis, is treated as natural here, thereby conforming to male theories of power. This masculinist view of the female body brings to mind the idea of the female sex organ as the Dark Continent waiting for penetration, for which the virgin is a figure. At this point the issue of rape involves men's sexual fantasies, of which the army surgeon Vespasien's marital life with his wife Alba Ram in *Le vieil homme et les loups* is the embodiment.

As Stéphanie tells us in her observations on Vespasien's metamorphoses into a wolf man,

Au début de ses métamorphoses, Vespasien n'avait pas cessé de la désirer. Il la prenait avec un plaisir furieux et lui demandait de raconter des histoires de viol. Quelqu'un l'avait sûrement violée, Alba, elle méritait bien ça. Quand? Où? Bandait-il fort, le violeur? Comment était ce sexe dressé? N'étaient-ils pas plusieurs? La battait-il? La battaient-ils? ... Alba rougissait, la nêfle se racornissait, plus de pulpe, cette sécheresse amère qui précède le dégoût. Mais non, une femme est construite sur le modèle des poupées russes, on peut toujours sortir une nouvelle marionnette de l'emboîtement et la faire parler. A la place de qui? A la place de rien, justement, car il n'y a que des mannequins, une ribambelle de poupées qui protègent le creux. Alors, la nêfle rabougrie inventait une histoire de viol qui devait exciter le loup, le chacal, le vautour (VH 56).

The fact that Alba is willing to submit herself to Vespasien's desire for sexual perversion suggests the workings of man's historical definition of woman as the Other in women's perceptions of their own bodies. On the other hand, raping women as matter-of-course for men is an appropriation of women as "the sex", since it objectifies women as sexualised and eroticised bodies. The idea of women's bodies as the embodiment of a certain ideological knowledge that shapes the culture of violence, and subjects the entire conceptual organisation to man, also appears in the love story of the couple Olga Morena and Hervé Sinteuil in *Les Samouraïs*.

Recounting her marital life with Hervé, Olga presents herself as Hervé's plaything:

Elle embrasse longuement sa bouche, ses cheveux, ses yeux, son cou.

Elle n'a pas de scénario érotique à sa disposition. Hervé lui demande parfois une histoire sexy pour attiser leur plaisir et pimenter le goût si équilibré de leurs baisers. Elle en trouve toujours une, inventée de toutes pièces, un peu drôle ou un peu trop porno, si bien que la vraisemblance du rôle qu'elle s'y attribue est minime et qu'elle fait rire Hervé au lieu de l'exciter (LS 167).

Despite the unsuccessful effort she makes to arouse Hervé, her obedience to his demand for a sexy story associates her with Alba, who is a sex object for her husband Vespasien before their marriage collapses, in *Le vieil homme et les loups*. She thus embodies the idea of woman as the other in relation to man who is the one, to which the counter-representation of female sexuality gives rise. This brings us back to Stéphanie's interpretation of rape in *Possessions*.

Here the female body as rapable in Stéphanie's understanding of Artemisia's picture undoes the violence of masculinist discourse of the body by exposing the violence itself. This doubling strategy relates the real painter Artemisia to the fictional characters Olga and Alba, which blurs the boundary between reality and fiction. If we regard Olga and Alba as the reincarnations of Artemisia, their bodies become "a site of knowledge, a medium for thought"⁴¹ in Gallop's words. Thinking through their bodies, the violence masculinist discourse of the body imposes on the body comes to the fore. By turning the violence of the mind-body dichotomy of the European philosophical tradition against itself, their bodies meet Gloria's corpse which is a figure for sexualising the textual woman.

⁴¹ Gallop, *Thinking Through the Body*, p. 3.

CONCLUSION

FRENCH FEMINIST THEORY AS A SUBJECT-IN-PROCESS

Having revisited the debate between French feminist theory and Anglo-American feminism through reading Kristeva's novels, I shall further look at the term French feminist theory itself, a term which is the subject of this research.

As an Anglo-American construction of French feminism, French feminist theory is also a springboard for the development of political Anglo-American feminist theory: lesbian feminist criticism, post-colonial feminist criticism, etc. The interaction between the political and the intellectual is indicative of the fact that French feminist theory is strategic for feminism. This idea is the focus of this conclusion that shall bring the exploration into Kristeva's novels as a medium for revisiting French feminist theory to a close.

One way of examining the relationship between feminism and French feminist theory is to compare the latter with Kristeva's involvement in feminism. Perhaps no feminist theorist who does not refer to her own writing as feminist has drawn so many feminists to her work like Kristeva. An explanation for this is that most feminists turn to her work to criticise it; the well-known Kristevan critic Kelly Oliver's frank statement at the opening of her book *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind* is an example of this. As Oliver remarks, "At the start of this project I began a fairly straightforward critique of Kristeva's theories" (1993, 1). Yet her following sentence, "But the more that I read and the more that I wrote, the more sympathetic I became to her project" (1993, 1), points to the potential relationship between Kristeva's work and feminism. That relationship is established through "[saving] Kristeva from her critics",¹ says Kathleen O'Grady.

By that, O'Grady refers to the trend of "*critical re-appraisal*" of Kristeva's work in Kristevan criticism; this is "typified [...] by the writings of Kelly Oliver, Martha Reineke, Anna Smith, and Ross Guberman" in the mid to late 1990s.² These writings, according to O'Grady, are no longer concerned with "explaining the difficult and often lugubrious passages of [Kristeva's] theoretical texts, as did the first wave of Kristevan criticism".³ This first wave of Kristevan criticism or what O'Grady calls "*celebratory explication*" of Kristeva's work in the 1970s and 1980s is "typified by the writings of Toril Moi and Elizabeth Grosz on 'French feminism' generally".⁴ This is followed by the second wave of Kristevan criticism that O'Grady describes as "*trenchant rejection* of [Kristeva's] theories,

¹ O'Grady, *Women's Studies International Forum* 21, 6 (1998), p. 700.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

emerging in the 1980s and early 1990s, which are marked by accusations of ‘orientalism,’ ‘essentialism,’ and ‘anti-feminism,’ represented by such writers as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Nancy Fraser, Christine Delphy, and Judith Butler”.⁵ The importance of this trend of Kristevan criticism is that it reminds the third wave Kristevan critics of the fact “that there is no need to accept every aspect of [Kristeva’s] work indiscriminately”.⁶

Neither neglecting the negative nor focusing exclusively on the positive relationship between Kristeva’s work and feminism, the writings of Kelly Oliver, Martha Reineke, Anna Smith, and Ross Guberman are in a sense a representation of Kristeva’s problematic status as a feminist theorist. In terms of the writings of Kelly Oliver, this takes two forms: explaining Kristeva’s concept of feminism in *Reading Kristeva* and compiling what in her work involves her in feminism in *The Portable Kristeva*. The former refers to Oliver’s discussion about Kristeva’s belief that “some feminisms, like politics in general, have become a type of religion” (1993, 153), a discussion which saves Kristeva from her second wave critics without overlooking the apolitical elements of her work. The latter allows Oliver to present the relationship between Kristeva’s work and feminism as it is; Kristeva’s <<Maternité selon Giovanni Bellini>> in *Polylogue*, <<Stabat Mater>> in *Histoires d’amour*, <<Le temps des femmes>> in *Les nouvelles maladies de l’âme*, and *Soleil noir: dépression et mélancolie* are representative of this relationship (1997, 295-300). Through re-introducing these writings of Kristeva to readers, Oliver re-assesses Kristeva’s involvement in feminism.

The idea that Kristeva’s project is political also constitutes the line of argument in Martha Reineke’s attempt to save Kristeva from her critics in *Sacrificed Lives: Kristeva on Women and Violence*. Commenting on Elizabeth Grosz’s and Judith Butler’s reading of Kristeva’s notion of the unconscious, which represents the first and the second wave of Kristevan criticism, Reineke writes,

Even though Grosz and Butler rightly acknowledge the centrality of Kristeva’s notion of the unconscious to her theorizing, they fail to appreciate that Kristeva offers a treatment of sexual difference and its deployment in a signifying economy that effectively subverts the paralyzing dichotomies about which Grosz and Butler express concern (1997, 33).

Here, “the paralyzing dichotomies about which Grosz and Butler express concern” are the shadow of a sex/gender divide in which the Kristevan concept of the unconscious is located; and the unconscious is a prison to which a subject who would be an agent in Kristeva’s hands is incarcerated, confined (1997, 33). This agency is interpreted by Grosz as what Kristeva empowers only the masculine subject to assert and by Butler as linked with a prediscursive libidinal economy. Yet neither Grosz’s belief that Kristeva “consigns agency exclusively to

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

culture (an arena of socially constructed identities)” nor Butler’s belief that “Kristeva assigns agency exclusively to nature (a realm of prediscursive sexual drives)” is, for Reineke, an apposite understanding of Kristeva’s project. According to Reineke,

Kristeva does not bifurcate the unconscious along a sex/gender divide. Rather, Kristeva traces the unconscious and its agency to subjects whose sexually differentiated identities emerge dynamically when boundary-making acts establish a signifying field: a site of shared intertextual practices. The work of these subjects – negativity – exhibits emancipatory and limiting, productive and constraining potential (1997, 33-34).

In other words, to approach Kristeva’s “contribution to discussions among feminist theorists about women’s agency and the violence that constrains it” (1997, 48), we need to analyse her concept of a subject-in-process.

Consisting of the interaction between the symbolic and the semiotic, the Kristevan subject engages in an ambiguous relationship with “sexually differentiated identities” (1997, 34). Its “borderline position” saves itself from the violence of sexual difference, of which Kristeva’s position as a female academic, critic, and writer is the embodiment. Such is the thesis in Anna Smith’s attempt to save Kristeva from her critics in *Julia Kristeva: Readings of Exile and Estrangement*. In that book, Smith uses Kristeva herself as the test subject to unravel her theory of the female writer and academic’s ambiguous relation to the symbolic contract. The borderline position of the female writer and academic, in Smith’s view, opens up a space from which the female writer and academic is able to take part in a new relationship with signification. This application of Kristeva’s theorisation of a subject-in-process is, however, “not as great a leap as it might seem, since Kristeva has begun this process herself in her own writings”,⁷ comments Kathleen O’Grady in her review of Smith’s book. The fact that Kristeva is a writer as subject-in-process is supported by Kristeva herself in her interview with Ross Mitchell Guberman, whose *Julia Kristeva Interviews* completes O’Grady’s discussion about the trend of “critical re-appraisal” of Kristeva’s work in Kristevan criticism.

In replying to Guberman’s question about what she considers to be her “substantial contribution to contemporary intellectual inquiry”, Kristeva remarks, “If there is something original about me, I believe it lies in the totality of my existence: the existence of a female intellectual” (1996, 265). By that, she refers to her ambiguous relation to the symbolic contract: “I would say that I am a *migrant*. I like to think that since humanity speaks, it is in a state of transit: between biology and meaning, the past and the future, pleasure and the absurd” (1996, 265). This is reflected in her work. As she explains,

⁷ Ibid., p. 701.

When I looked at the text as a 'structure' to suggest that we read an 'intertextuality' into it, when I proposed that we interpret 'meaning' as a process and a 'significance' brought into play by the two modalities of the 'semiotic' (the drive representative contingent on biology and on the archaic bond with the maternal [object]) (*sic*) and the 'symbolic' (the linguistic representative contingent on the oedipal stage, castration, and the paternal function), or when I suggested that we stop enclosing literature merely in the text (even though that approach is more beneficial than reductive psychological or sociological readings), discerning instead an *experience* that considers the sensation close to Being, I believe I was pursuing the same unconscious project: contemplating instability, movement, and rebirth (1996, 265-266).

This self-portrait of her project relates Guberman's question to Reineke's reading of the Kristevan concept of the unconscious, of which Smith's work is an exercise. Through these writings of her critics, Kristeva as a subject-in-process is able to integrate what she herself calls "the age-old debate between the 'universalists' and the 'differentialists'" (1996, 269), a result which is related to her answer to Guberman's question about whether any of her ideas has "been misconstrued or misunderstood by the English-speaking public" (1996, 267).

According to Kristeva herself, "much of what has been written in the United States about [her] conception has been inaccurate": "People have either defined and glorified the 'semiotic' as if it were a female essence or else claimed that I do not grant enough autonomy to this 'essence,' this 'difference'" (1996, 269). She argues that, rather than clinging to "differentialism and [fanning] the flame of a war between the sexes" (1996, 269), as American feminists do, she tries to counteract the violence of sexual difference:

My goal is to inscribe difference at the heart of the universal and to contribute to what is much more difficult than war: the possibility, with a little bit of luck, that men and women, two human species with sometimes conflicting desires, will find a way to understand each other (1996, 269).

The idea of finding a way to understand each other for both sexes brings us back to her concept of a subject-in-process which embodies her search for the unconscious project: "contemplating instability, movement, and rebirth" (1996, 266). In that signifying process, the subject's "sexually differentiated identities emerge dynamically" (1997, 34), to quote Reineke; this "vital heterogeneity of a fluid, free subjectivity"⁸ thus does not eradicate sexual difference but subdues what Kristeva calls <<la <lutte à mort> entre les deux>> in <<Le temps des femmes>> (1993, 328).

By bringing to feminism the possibility of destabilising <<la dichotomie homme/femme en tant qu'opposition de deux entités rivales>> (1993, 328), Kristeva puts the "universalists" in dialogue with the "differentialists" (1996, 269). The interaction between

⁸ Anne-Marie Smith, "Transgression, Transubstantiation, Transference", *Paragraph* 20, 3 (1997), p. 278.

the political and the intellectual ushers in the theme of this conclusion: the relationship between feminism and French feminist theory. A representation of that relationship is Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron's *New French Feminisms*. As I have mentioned in the introduction to part two of this thesis, the book presents feminism in France the way it was in the 1970s, which suggests to me a French version of Anglo-American feminism. This involves French feminist theory as an opposing entity, whose interaction with feminism in France constitutes French feminism. In this sense, French feminism can be seen as the counterpart of Anglo-American feminism, on which French feminist theory has an impact. As Nancy Fraser has pointed out in her introduction to *Revaluing French Feminism: Critical Essays on Difference, Agency, and Culture*,

Thanks to "bridge" media like *Sojourner*, *Off Our Backs*, and *The Women's Review of Books*, some of the signature conceptions of deconstructive and psychoanalytic French feminist theories have reached a broader, extra-academic public. These conceptions seem to resonate – however imperfectly – with widespread indigenous concerns rooted in the current dilemmas of our own feminist politics. Conversely, as French feminist terms and expressions have achieved wider currency [in the United States], they have acquired a degree of formative power to reshape some Anglophone feminist agendas. In sum, elements of those discourses that go under the name 'French Feminism' have influenced feminist culture in the United States and may be helping to reconfigure it (1992, 2).

The fact that French feminist theory provides a framework for the development of feminist culture in the United States relates the interaction between the intellectual and the political to the Kristevan concept of a signifying process. This means that both French feminist theory and Anglo-American feminism are subjects-in-process: just as French feminist theory is politicised in its interaction with Anglo-American feminism, so Anglo-American feminism becomes theoretical in its interaction with French feminist theory.

French feminist theory and Anglo-American feminism as subjects-in-process problematises the categories woman/women, as well as the notion of difference, to which a critique of Western feminism and its universalising tendencies leads. This points to the emergence of feminist theory that concerns identity politics as a product of the interaction between the "differentialists" and the "universalists". At issue in that interaction, according to Teresa Brennan, is change. She explains this in her answer to her own question concerning the relationship between psychoanalytic theory and the socio-historical concerns of feminist strategies in "An Impasse in Psychoanalysis and Feminism":

With reservations, Mitchell (1974) approached psychoanalysis as a tool for the socio-historical analysis of women's oppression; she saw it as a potential adjunct to a materialist theory of ideology. Using Freud and Lacan (who dominates the debate) Mitchell said that potentially, possibly, psychoanalysis theorised a socio-historical product. In this, it theorised something mutable (1991, 114).

The idea that psychoanalysis “theorised something mutable” in its function “as a tool for the socio-historical analysis of women’s oppression” indicates that it, too, is a subject-in-process (1991, 114). This is preceded by readings of it as opposed to and as related to “a materialist theory of ideology” (1991, 114), two approaches which attest to the problematics of understanding what it is. A discussion about how it is understood then constitutes Brennan’s criticism of Mitchell’s, Jane Gallop’s, Jacqueline Rose’s, and Nancy Chodorow’s work on psychoanalysis and feminism. Here Brennan aligns herself with Mitchell and Rose, who “argue that psychoanalysis is not a socialization theory, nor an extension of the theory of ideology” (1991, 114). For them, says Brennan, “psychoanalysis is not (primarily) a theory of how socially created sexual relations are internalized [but how they are constructed]” (1991, 114). In other words, “(Lacan’s) psychoanalytic account cannot be reduced to socio-historical facts” (1991, 115), an argument which encapsulates materialist feminists’ reaction to French feminist theory.

The interpretation of French feminist theory as apolitical reflects the fact that materialist feminists “are acutely aware of the socio-historical rationale of feminist political action, and are evidently committed to it” (1991, 115), to quote Brennan. Her observations on the way in which French feminist theory poses a problem to the cause of women for materialist feminists are representative of most Anglo-American feminists’ view of French feminist theory. Yet, as discussed in the introduction to part two of this thesis, such a view of French feminist theory is in fact an Anglo-American construction of French feminism. The implication that the reception of French feminism has been partial and selective in the Anglophone feminist reading public in turn destabilises debates on psychoanalysis and feminism. Conversely, those debates do not concern Anglo-American feminists who endorse the idea of psychoanalysis as “a socialization theory”, “an extension of the theory of ideology” (1991, 114). For them, says Brennan, “the cause(s) of women’s oppression can be pinpointed in certain social relations which can be acted on” (1991, 115). The problem with this belief in feminist appropriation of psychoanalysis is that “psychical sexuality cannot be reduced to ‘sociology’” (1991, 115). Part two of this thesis presents a solution to this problem. As an exploration of psychoanalysis at the level of psychical sexuality, part two of this thesis embodies the idea of psychoanalysis and feminism as subjects-in-process. At this point a comparison can be made between part two of this thesis and the unconscious project that Kristeva pursues; both instances of presenting the relationship between psychoanalysis and feminism as interactive involve the Kristevan concept of a subject-in-process.

The presence of the Kristevan subject in part two of this thesis is associated with the stories of Kristeva’s heroines, who act as mediums for the interaction between psychoanalysis and feminism. These heroines include Olga Morena, Alba Ram, and Gloria

Harrison. With Olga in *Les Samouraïs*, she is the embodiment of a “third feminist attitude” which is a representation of the signifying process that consists of the interaction between feminine time and masculine time in the fourth chapter of this thesis. Later in the sixth chapter of this thesis, she, together with Alba in *Le vieil homme et les loups*, embodies the idea of sexualising the textual woman. This idea illustrates a signifying process that consists of the interaction between feminine writing and masculine discourse of the body. The interaction between psychoanalysis and feminism appears, in the fifth chapter of this thesis, in the stories of Alba and Gloria, who is the heroine in *Possessions*: they embody the idea of a her/ethics of maternity.

The workings of the Kristevan concept of a subject-in-process in the interaction between psychoanalysis and feminism suggest that an exploration into psychoanalysis and feminism can only be ongoing. This is, for instance, Kristeva’s point when she says that “instability, movement, and rebirth” are the essence of her intellectual project (1996, 266), with which her approach to feminism has close parallels. As John Lechte tells us in his discussion about the importance of Kristeva in *Julia Kristeva*, “Kristeva’s approach to feminism could never be couched with an either/or polemical framework of either the feminine semiotic *or* the masculine symbolic” (1990, 202). Rather, it is an interrogation of gender, of which “aesthetic practices” are a representation. Here “aesthetic practices”, in Lechte’s words, “are equivalent to transcending difference as a battle between rival groups of all kinds (including that of the sexes), in order to turn it into the basis of new possibilities for subjectivity” (1990, 207). The ideal of a harmonious relationship “between rival groups of all kinds (including that of the sexes)” “aesthetic practices” can achieve is, in this sense, the embodiment of what feminists fight for in reality. The association of social practices with “aesthetic practices” in this approach to feminism is, however, problematic; it is interpreted differently by Kristevan critics and results in what O’Grady calls “*celebratory explication*”, “*trenchant rejection*”, and “*critical re-appraisal*” of Kristeva’s work. These trends of Kristevan criticism point to Kristeva’s work as open, a fact which is reflected in approaches to French feminist theory.

The idea that French feminist theory, of which Kristeva’s work is part, is open brings us back to that idea of it as a subject-in-process. In other words, the impossibility of pinning down the meaning of French feminist theory leads to different readings of the relationship between French feminist theory and feminism. Those readings in turn present the relationship between French feminist theory and feminism as a subject-in-process. The question to conclude this research on French feminist theory is, what are the results of the interaction between French feminist theory and feminism? Moreover, what is the significance of these results for feminists? The first question, as mentioned in the

introduction to this conclusion, leads us to the emergence of lesbian feminist criticism and post-colonial feminist criticism in the history of Anglo-American feminist theory. As part one of this thesis has addressed the implications of the relationship between French feminist theory and post-colonial feminist theory, the focus here will be on lesbian feminist criticism. Through a discussion about this political Anglo-American feminist theory, this research on French feminist theory will provide readers an idea of what can further be done on psychoanalysis and feminism, a subject which constitutes the theoretical background of my reading of Kristeva's novels.

The way in which lesbian feminist criticism is related to French feminist theory concerns, first and foremost, Luce Irigaray's attempt to combine a psychoanalytic and political approach to lesbianism in *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*. In that book, she advances the concept of <<hom(m)o-sexualité>> that, in punning on the signifiers of both maleness and sameness, captures the dual nature of hetero-patriarchal culture (1977, 168). By debunking the nature of <<hom(m)o-sexuel>> discourse, which privileges "male [homo-social] relations and a male sexuality of the same (whether hetero- or homosexual)",⁹ she brings together critiques of gender and of sexual power relations. This characteristic of her work points to anti-essentialism as the core of her work and thus chimes with the political aims of lesbian feminism. An example of lesbian feminist criticism that uses her concept of <<hom(m)o-sexualité>> to discuss the invisibilising of the lesbian body/text is Teresa de Lauretis's "Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation". Here de Lauretis gives an interpretation that is different from dominant ones of Radclyffe Hall's lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness*; she reads against the grain of sexology and draws out the text's "other" lesbianism. In playing on the distinction between sex/gender and sexuality, she celebrates the diversity of both critical and creative lesbian writing. Her approach to the ways in which "lesbian writers and artists have sought variously to escape gender, to deny it, transcend it, or perform it in excess, and to inscribe the erotic in cryptic, allegorical, realistic, camp, or other modes of representation"¹⁰ is in this instance common to lesbian and queer theory.

The fact that lesbian and queer theory has drawn on French feminist theory also concerns Kristeva's theory of maternity. As Kelly Oliver notes in *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*, "Within Kristeva's analysis [...], feminine sexuality is fundamentally homosexual. Feminine sexuality is determined by a lesbian relationship between daughter and mother. Lesbian love is everywhere repressed beneath the surface in

⁹ Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson, and Peter Brooker, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, p. 251.

¹⁰ de Lauretis, "Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation", in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, p. 144.

'Stabat Mater'" (1993, 140). This is a response to Kristeva's critics who argue that Kristeva denies lesbian loves; these critics are Jane Gallop, Elizabeth Grosz, and Judith Butler.

While Gallop and Grosz ask why there is no lesbian (love) in Kristeva's *Histoires d'amour*, Oliver sees "lesbian love pushed into every corner of [*Histoires d'amour*]" (1993, 140). On her reading,

Hints of an erotics of the purely feminine and female homosexuality appear in the text at those points where Kristeva seems frustrated with and weary of the same old love stories. Lesbian love appears in the condensations and displacements of Kristeva's texts. She recognizes a lesbian love (1993, 140).

Yet this lesbian love is once again "the daughter's love for her mother and the mother's for her child", which suggests that Kristeva "overlooks or denies the love of one woman for another" to several of her critics (1993, 140). Here Oliver holds a different view: "while it is true that [Kristeva's] homoerotic fantasy is the fantasy of a mother-daughter relationship, it is also a relationship between two women, a relationship that could only be sublimated into a relation with a mother-substitute, another woman" (1993, 141). This view of Kristeva's lesbian love can be related to Adrienne Rich's approach to lesbianism.

In her essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" in *Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose 1969-1985*, Rich celebrates the devalued bond between mothers and daughters to argue:

If women are the earliest sources of emotional caring and nurture for both female and male children, it would seem logical, from a feminist perspective at least, to pose the following questions: whether the search for love and tenderness in both sexes does not originally lead toward women; *why in fact women would ever redirect that search ...* (1987, 35).

The idea of a woman's search for love and tenderness from another as the foundation of lesbian desire echoes the notion of a lesbian sexuality as predicated upon "sameness" and "identification" in both lesbian literature and theory. This explanation of lesbianism is thus reminiscent of Kristeva's theory of maternity, since it presents lesbian desire as "a logical re-enactment of a woman's primary bond based upon the recognition of sexual sameness".¹¹ Yet the work upon which Rich draws here is not Kristeva's *Histoires d'amour* but Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering*. In this case, Chodorow's psychoanalytic account of mother-daughter relationship embodies the idea of French feminist theory as a subject-in-process. For, as Brennan observes in "An Impasse in Psychoanalysis and Feminism", some feminist critics think that Chodorow "[sociologizes] psychoanalysis" by arguing that "the psychical evidence of psychoanalytic theories could be explained by a socio-historical fact: women are responsible for the early nurturing of children" (1991, 115).

¹¹ Lynne Pearce, "Lesbian Criticism", in *Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading*, p. 231.

The mother-daughter relationship as a form of lesbianism in this sense conveys the presence of French feminist theory in lesbian feminist criticism. An example of lesbian feminist criticism as interactive with French feminist theory is Judith Butler's critique of the body politics of Kristeva in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.

According to Butler,

For Kristeva, the unmediated cathexis of female homosexual desire leads unequivocally to psychosis. Hence, one can satisfy this drive only through a series of displacements: the incorporation of maternal identity – that is, by becoming a mother oneself – or through poetic language which manifests obliquely the heterogeneity of drives characteristic of maternal dependency. As the only socially sanctioned and, hence, nonpsychotic displacements for homosexual desire, both maternity and poetry constitute melancholic experiences for women appropriately acculturated into heterosexuality. The heterosexual poet-mother suffers interminably from the displacement of the homosexual cathexis. And yet, the consummation of this desire would lead to the psychotic unraveling of identity, according to Kristeva – the presumption being that, for women, heterosexuality and coherent selfhood are indissolubly linked (1990, 86-87).

The argument that women are melancholy heterosexuals longing for lesbian love appears, for Butler's critic, Kelly Oliver, to be an apposite reading of Kristeva's formulation of female homosexual desire. Yet Oliver does not credit Butler's suggestion that psychosis is the only alternative Kristeva leaves for women who "are lesbians perverted by compulsory heterosexuality" (1993, 141). Rather than accepting the dualism between homosexuality and heterosexuality, Kristeva, in Oliver's view, "suggests that there are as many sexualities as there are individuals. Like Butler, she endorses the multiplication of sexualities" (1993, 141). This concept of "the multiplication of sexualities", according to Oliver, is indicative of "Kristeva's work as an intervention into traditional heterosexist psychoanalytic discourse", for if it is not recognised, "it is because traditional psychoanalytic discourse, among others, naturalizes a binary structure, what Butler, following Wittig, calls the 'heterosexual matrix'" (1993, 141). The attempt Kristeva makes to "break open a discourse that continues to insist on a binary structure" in turn provides women with "new fantasies", "with which they can live with what Kristeva sees as their primary loss, the loss of their mothers" (1993, 141), concludes Oliver. Her conclusion offers an answer to the question of what the significance of the results of the interaction between French feminist theory and feminism is.

Apart from interacting with the identity politics of lesbian feminism, the work of Kristeva is also involved in the political aims of post-colonial feminist theory. As the first chapter of this thesis has illustrated, the representation of the Dark Continent motif in Kristeva's novels has close parallels with the critique of it in the work of feminist post-colonial critics. This similarity between French feminist theory and its interaction with feminism, since post-colonial feminist theory results from putting French feminist theory to

work for feminist purposes, points to psychoanalysis as potentially a theory that mirrors (changing) social practices. In this sense, Kristeva's novels can be said to be the application of her theories to practices associated with social realities, for her theories, according to Kelly Oliver, attempt "to open up the possibility of redrawing the boundaries of the social".¹² By that, Oliver refers to the fact that "Kristeva constructs models of discourse that admit, even embrace, the alterity within them".¹³ Psychoanalysis is one of these Kristevan models of discourse, which "taps the unconscious other scene that operates within every apparently unified subject"¹⁴ and is thus at odds with Lacan's psychoanalytic account. While Lacan emphasises the mirror stage and the Name of the Father as the initiation into subjectivity, Kristeva sees subjectivity as a process that begins with the material body before the mirror stage. Her notion of all human beings as subjects-in-process in turn involves subjectivity in (changing) social practices. As Oliver explains,

It is important that alterity or difference can exist without being repressed or annihilated and at the same time without completely breaking down identity. Without identity we have no Symbolic order. Without the Symbolic order, we have no society, no human life, no love.¹⁵

This explanation of Kristevan psychoanalysis is illustrated by Kristeva's novels. The fact that her novels reflect to a certain extent social realities further reinforces her theorisation of the link between psychoanalysis and (changing) social practices. Although this overlooks the apolitical elements of psychoanalysis, as well as of her novels that are a special form of reflecting reality, this brings out the inseparability between intellectual life and its political and social context. The implications of psychoanalysis and feminism attest to the idea of these as subjects-in-process, something which Kristeva's remark on what her novels mean to her captures: "fiction has become an indispensable way for me to keep my unconscious open, which is necessary for liberty and vitality – not only because I am a psychoanalyst but so that 'death will not live a human life'".¹⁶ This ongoing search for rebirth is also what feminists who work on the relationship between French feminist theory and feminism were and are doing.

¹² Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*, p. 12.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ross Guberman, "Julia Kristeva Speaks Out", in *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, p. 270.

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